

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

COMMISSIONERS:

Allison M. Macfarlane, Chairman
Kristine L. Svinicki
George Apostolakis
William D. Magwood, IV
William C. Ostendorff

In the Matter of)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY)

(High-Level Waste Repository))

) Docket No. 63-001
)
)
)
)

CLI-14-01

MEMORANDUM AND ORDER

In response to the writ of mandamus issued by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, we recently issued a decision and companion Staff Requirements Memorandum setting forth the course of action we selected to continue the licensing process for the Department of Energy's Yucca Mountain high-level radioactive waste repository.¹ The State of Nevada requests that we clarify certain aspects of the decision and the SRM; Nye County, Nevada, the States of South Carolina and Washington, Aiken County, South Carolina, and the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (together, the "Five Parties") seek

¹ See *generally* CLI-13-8, 78 NRC ___ (Nov. 18, 2013) (slip op.); Staff Requirements—SECY-13-0113—Memorandum and Order Concerning Resumption of Yucca Mountain Licensing Process (Nov. 18, 2013) (ADAMS accession no. ML13322A007) (SRM); *In re Aiken County*, 725 F.3d 255 (D.C. Cir. 2013).

reconsideration of certain aspects of our decision.² As discussed below, we deny both requests.

I. DISCUSSION

We undertook CLI-13-8 and the companion SRM pursuant to our inherent authority to supervise the Staff's work and adjudicatory proceedings relating to license applications.³ Our authority to reconsider or clarify such a decision, if needed, is likewise inherent in our authority to render the decision in the first instance.⁴

As we stated in CLI-13-8, the course of action that we approved to resume the Yucca Mountain licensing process constitutes the next logical steps in that process. These actions, principally completion of the safety evaluation report (SER) and completion of a supplemental environmental impact statement, are intended to advance the process "in a manner that is constructive and consistent with the court's decision and the resources available."⁵ We have

² *State of Nevada Petition for Clarification of November 18, 2013 Restart Order and Related Staff Requirements Memorandum* (Nov. 27, 2013) (Nevada Petition); *Request for Leave to File Motion for Reconsideration of Memorandum and Order* (Nov. 27, 2013), and *Motion for Reconsideration of Memorandum and Order* (Nov. 27, 2013) (Five Parties Motion). We received three answers to the requests. *Five Parties' Answer to Nevada's Petition for Clarification of Restart Order and Staff Requirements Memorandum* (Dec. 9, 2013); *State of Nevada Consolidated Answers to (1) Five Parties' Request for Leave to File Motion for Reconsideration and (2) Five Parties' Motion for Reconsideration of Commission's November 18, 2013 Restart Order* (Dec. 9, 2013); *NRC Staff Answer to Petition for Clarification and Response to Motion for Reconsideration* (Dec. 9, 2013) (Staff Answer).

³ CLI-13-8, 78 NRC at ___ (slip op. at 6) (citing *Shieldalloy Metallurgical Corp.* (Decommissioning of the Newfield, New Jersey Site), CLI-13-6, 78 NRC ___ (Aug. 5, 2013) (slip op.); *AmerGen Energy Co., LLC* (Oyster Creek Nuclear Generating Station), CLI-08-23, 68 NRC 461, 476 (2008); and *Pacific Gas & Electric Co.* (Diablo Canyon Power Plant Independent Spent Fuel Storage Installation), CLI-02-23, 56 NRC 230, 237 (2002)).

⁴ *Florida Power & Light Co.* (St. Lucie Nuclear Power Plant, Unit 2), CLI-80-41, 12 NRC 650, 652 (1980) (citing *Trujillo v. Gen. Elec. Co.*, 621 F.2d 1084, 1086 (10th Cir. 1980)).

⁵ CLI-13-8, 78 NRC at ___ (slip op. at 9).

considered Nevada's and the Five Parties' requests.⁶ As discussed below, we do not find that our decisions require revision or clarification.

A. Nevada's Petition for Clarification

Nevada seeks clarification that, should the adjudication be restarted and discovery resume, we will adjust the milestone for the proceeding calling for completion of discovery sixty days after the SER is issued.⁷ In CLI-13-8, we declined to consider various requests related to the adjudication in view of our decision to continue to hold the adjudication in abeyance. As we stated there, should the adjudication re-commence at a future time, "participants will have the opportunity to re-submit requests associated with the conduct of the proceeding at that time."⁸ Additional potential deviations from the schedule in 10 C.F.R. Part 2, Appendix D associated with the adjudication—including the one raised by Nevada here—would be appropriately addressed at that time. No participant will be unfairly prejudiced.

Nevada also seeks clarification of the SRM. In particular, Nevada requests that we clarify our direction that the NRC staff, in carrying out the directions in CLI-13-8, "adopt work previously completed as a first principle."⁹ Nevada states its concern that the phrase "work previously completed" can be interpreted to imply a judgment that all work relevant to the safety

⁶ The Staff objects to the Five Parties' request on procedural grounds, citing provisions relevant to adjudications in 10 C.F.R. Part 2, Subpart C. Staff Answer at 5-7. Our rules provide that a motion for reconsideration "must demonstrate a compelling circumstance, such as the existence of a clear and material error in a decision, which could not have been reasonably anticipated, which renders the decision invalid." 10 C.F.R. § 2.345. *Accord* 10 C.F.R. §§ 2.323(e), 2.341(d) (referencing the standard in section 2.323(e)). Assuming that this standard applies to the Five Parties' motion, we observe that the Five Parties neither demonstrate a clear and material error in our decision nor raise any issue that could not reasonably have been anticipated. Further, as discussed *infra*, the Five Parties have not shown that any of the requested relief is required. The Five Parties have not, therefore, demonstrated any error that renders our decision invalid.

⁷ Nevada Petition at 2-3.

⁸ CLI-13-8, 78 NRC at ___ (slip op. at 18).

⁹ Nevada Petition at 3.

evaluation performed to date may be adopted without further “investigation or inquiry,” or might include the Staff’s Technical Evaluation Reports.¹⁰ We decline to revisit the SRM. As the Staff correctly observes, neither Nevada nor any other external entity is entitled to seek revisions to a Commission direction to the NRC staff contained in an SRM.¹¹ In any event, however, no clarification of this direction is needed. The Staff represents—and we expect—that it will undertake completion of its review activities, including development of its findings on the Safety Evaluation Report, consistent with “existing agency requirements and guidance.”¹² Further, as always, we expect the Staff to complete a robust review addressing all applicable regulatory requirements, with its analysis and conclusions documented in the SER, and for those working on the project to exercise their independent professional judgment in the performance of their duties.

B. Five Parties’ Motion for Reconsideration

The Five Parties seek greater detail on the licensing activities than we set forth in CLI-13-8, as well as additional information that they believe will help them to assess the merits of the course of action we have selected. They request, for example, “an order outlining a schedule of deadlines for issuance of the remaining [safety evaluation report volumes]”; “a detailed listing of what work remains on each individual [safety evaluation report volume], and an explanation for estimating that an additional twelve months is required”; and an “explanation

¹⁰ *Id.* at 3-4.

¹¹ Staff Answer at 4 & nn. 9, 11 (citing Internal Commission Procedures (July 5, 2011) at II-9, III-11, *available at* <http://www.nrc.gov/about-nrc/policy-making/internal.html> (last visited Dec. 18, 2013). The cited provisions describe the contents of an SRM and the process for reviewing draft SRMs, respectively.

¹² See Staff Answer at 3-5 (citing “Yucca Mountain Review Plan,” NUREG-1804 (Rev. 2 July 2003) (ML032030389) and NRC Management Directive 3.57, “Correspondence Management” (Oct. 18, 2005) (ML053070034) (describing concurrence processes)). Further, the Staff represents that it is preparing review guidance that will address our direction on its conduct of this review. *Id.* at 4-5.

for why prompt issuance of the SERs, followed by staged discovery and adjudication of Phase I post-closure issues, is not achievable with available funds.”¹³

As we stated in CLI-13-8, the court in *Aiken County* “afforded us broad discretion in choosing a pragmatic course of action to resume the licensing process.” The course of action we selected complies with the fundamental direction of the D.C. Circuit—to resume the licensing process. As fully explained in CLI-13-8, by taking an incremental approach, we have attempted to ensure, to the maximum extent possible, that the next logical steps in the process are completed.¹⁴ Although the petitioners in the *Aiken County* decision sought a broad mandamus order, nothing in the court’s decision required us to undertake a particular course of action, to conduct an accounting containing the level of detail sought by the Five Parties, or to subject the Staff’s estimates of the time required to perform its work to the scrutiny of third parties. We decline to order the Staff to do more than has been directed by the D.C. Circuit. Although we expect that the activities outlined in CLI-13-8 will expend “nearly all of the funds currently available to the NRC”¹⁵—leaving few, if any, funds for other licensing activities, including the resumption of the adjudication—we have committed to re-evaluate this conclusion “in the event that circumstances materially change.”¹⁶ And as we have stated, we are closely monitoring the cost and progress of the Staff’s activities, and we will give direction for reprioritization of time and funds should estimates prove inaccurate. That is to say, in the event the NRC appears

¹³ Five Parties Motion at 3, 4, 5.

¹⁴ CLI-13-8, 78 NRC at __ (slip op. at 9-12).

¹⁵ *Id.* at __ (slip op. at 21).

¹⁶ *Id.* at __ (slip op. at 22) (footnote omitted).

likely to exhaust funds prior to completing the activities we have directed, we will provide direction to the Staff to maximize completion of these activities.¹⁷

In short, in CLI-13-8 we outlined a course of action, necessarily predictive in nature, to complete the next logical steps in this licensing process. Our chosen path forward is consistent with the court's direction in *Aiken County* and the limited available funds, and further relief is not warranted.

* * * * *

One other matter merits mention. In CLI-13-8, we observed that the agency had remaining \$2.5 million “in obligated, unexpended funds that would become available if contract audit activities are completed and these funds are eligible for subsequent [de-obligation].”¹⁸ In December 2013, \$2.2 million in obligated, unexpended Nuclear Waste Fund appropriations were de-obligated and are now available for agency use.¹⁹ Now that additional funds are available we are providing further direction to the Staff, consistent with CLI-13-8 and the companion SRM, on the use of those funds to make the Licensing Support Network document collection publicly available in the Agencywide Documents Access and Management System.²⁰

¹⁷ SRM at 2 (unnumbered) (instructing the Staff to provide monthly progress reports that will include “accomplishments, updated schedules for remaining activities, the cost of remaining activities, and stakeholder communications and interactions”). In addition, we are providing to Congress monthly reports on NRC activities and expenditure of unobligated carryover funds appropriated from the Nuclear Waste Fund. These reports are publicly available. See CLI-13-8, 78 NRC at ___ n.86 (slip op. at 22 n.86).

¹⁸ CLI-13-8, 78 NRC at ___ (slip op. at 10 n.35).

¹⁹ The remaining balance of approximately \$300,000 is reserved to cover any emergent costs identified during the ongoing contract closeout process.

²⁰ CLI-13-8, 78 NRC at ___ (slip op. at 13 n.47); SRM at 2 (unnumbered). We provide this direction separately. See Staff Requirements—SECY-13-0138/SECY-13-0138A—U.S. Department of Energy (High-Level Waste Repository): State of Nevada Petition for Clarification of November 18, 2013 Restart Order and Related Staff Requirements Memorandum (Nov. 27, 2013); “Five Parties” Motion for Reconsideration of Memorandum and Order (Nov. 27, 2013) (Jan. 24, 2014) (ML14024A265).

In light of the uncertainties inherent in cost projections, we reiterate that we continue to closely monitor all ongoing activities and Nuclear Waste Fund expenditures to ensure effective implementation of our direction and prudent use of funds.²¹

II. CONCLUSION

For the reasons set forth above, we *deny* Nevada's and the Five Parties' requests.

IT IS SO ORDERED.²²

For the Commission

NRC SEAL

/RA/

Annette L. Vietti-Cook
Secretary of the Commission

Dated at Rockville, Maryland
this 24th day of January, 2014.

²¹ CLI-13-8, 78 NRC at ___ (slip op. at 22 & n.87); SRM at 2 (unnumbered).

²² Commissioner Apostolakis has recused himself from this adjudication and, therefore, did not participate in this matter. See Notice of Recusal (July 15, 2010).

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NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY)
(High-Level Waste Repository))

) Docket No. 63-001-HLW
) ASLBP No. 09-892-HLW-CAB04
)

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that copies of the foregoing **COMMISSION MEMORANDUM AND ORDER CLI-14-01, "DECISION ON STATE OF NEVADA REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATION AND 'FIVE PARTIES' REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION,"** have been served upon the following persons by Electronic Information Exchange and by e-mail. Some participants do not have current digital certificates.

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

Construction Authorization Board 04 (CAB04)

Thomas S. Moore, Chair
Administrative Judge
thomas.moore@nrc.gov

Paul S. Ryerson
Administrative Judge
paul.ryerson@nrc.gov

Richard E. Wardwell
Administrative Judge
richard.wardwell@nrc.gov

Carter Thurman, Law Clerk
carter.thurman@nrc.gov

Anthony C. Eitrem, Esq., Chief Counsel
anthony.eitrem@nrc.gov

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of the General Counsel
Mail Stop O-15D21
Washington, DC 20555-0001
Jessica Bielecki, Esq.

jessica.bielecki@nrc.gov

Joseph S. Gilman, Esq.

joseph.gilman@nrc.gov

Daniel W. Lenehan, Esq.

daniel.lenehan@nrc.gov

Megan A. Wright, Esq.

megan.wright@nrc.gov

Mitzi A. Young, Esq.

mitzi.young@nrc.gov

Shelbie Lewman, Esq.

shelbie.lewman@nrc.gov

Eric Michel, Esq.

eric.michel@nrc.gov

OGC Mail Center
OGCMailCenter@nrc.gov

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of Commission Appellate Adjudication
Mail Stop O-7H4M
Washington, DC 20555-0001
OCA Mail Center
oca@mail@nrc.gov

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of the Secretary of the Commission
Mail Stop O-16C1
Washington, DC 20555-0001
Hearing Docket
hearingdocket@nrc.gov

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY (High Level Waste Repository) Docket No. 63-001-HLW
**COMMISSION MEMORANDUM AND ORDER CLI-14-01, "DECISION ON STATE OF NEVADA REQUEST
FOR CLARIFICATION AND 'FIVE PARTIES' REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION"**

U.S. Department of Energy
Office of General Counsel
1000 Independence Avenue S.W.
Washington, DC 20585
Martha S. Crosland, Esq.
martha.crosland@hq.doe.gov
Nicholas P. DiNunzio, Esq.
nick.dinunzio@rw.doe.gov
James Bennett McRae
ben.mcrae@hq.doe.gov
Cyrus Nezhad, Esq.
cyrus.nezhad@hq.doe.gov
Christina C. Pak, Esq.
christina.pak@hq.doe.gov

Office of Counsel, Naval Sea Systems Command
Nuclear Propulsion Program
1333 Isaac Hull Avenue, SE, Building 197
Washington, DC 20376
Frank A. Putzu, Esq.
frank.putzu@navy.mil

For U.S. Department of Energy
Talisman International, LLC
1000 Potomac St., NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20007
Patricia Larimore, Senior Paralegal
plarimore@talisman-intl.com

Counsel for U.S. Department of Energy
Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP
1111 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20004
Lewis M. Csedrik, Esq.
lcshedrik@morganlewis.com
Raphael P. Kuyler, Esq.
rkuyler@morganlewis.com
Charles B. Moldenhauer, Esq.
cmoldenhauer@morganlewis.com
Thomas D. Poindexter, Esq.
tpoindexter@morganlewis.com
Alex S. Polonsky, Esq.
apolonsky@morganlewis.com
Thomas A. Schmutz, Esq.
tschmutz@morganlewis.com
Donald J. Silverman, Esq.
dsilverman@morganlewis.com
Paul J. Zaffuts, Esq.
pzaffuts@morganlewis.com
Shannon Staton, Legal Secretary
sstaton@morganlewis.com
Elaine M. Hirsch, Legal Secretary
ehirsch@morganlewis.com

Counsel for U.S. Department of Energy
Hunton & Williams LLP
Riverfront Plaza, East Tower
951 East Byrd Street
Richmond, VA 23219
Kelly L. Faglioni, Esq.
kfaglioni@hunton.com
Donald P. Irwin, Esq.
dirwin@hunton.com
Stephanie Meharg, Paralegal
smeharg@hunton.com
Michael R. Shebelskie, Esq.
mshebelskie@hunton.com
Belinda A. Wright, Sr. Professional Assistant
bwright@hunton.com

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY (High Level Waste Repository) Docket No. 63-001-HLW
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Counsel for State of Nevada
Egan, Fitzpatrick, Malsch & Lawrence, PLLC
1750 K Street, NW, Suite 350
Washington, DC 20006
Martin G. Malsch, Esq.
mmalsch@nuclearlawyer.com
Susan Montesi:
smontesi@nuclearlawyer.com

Counsel for State of Nevada
Egan, Fitzpatrick, Malsch & Lawrence, PLLC
1777 N.E. Loop 410, Suite 600
San Antonio, TX 78217
Charles J. Fitzpatrick, Esq.
cfitzpatrick@nuclearlawyer.com
John W. Lawrence, Esq.
jlawrence@nuclearlawyer.com
Laurie Borski, Paralegal
lborski@nuclearlawyer.com

Bureau of Government Affairs
Nevada Attorney General
100 N. Carson Street
Carson City, NV 89701
Marta Adams, Chief Deputy Attorney General
madams@ag.nv.gov

Nevada Agency for Nuclear Projects
Nuclear Waste Project Office
1761 East College Parkway, Suite 118
Carson City, NV 89706
Steve Frishman, Tech. Policy Coordinator
steve.frishman@gmail.com
Susan Lynch, Administrator of Technical Prgms
szeeee@nuc.state.nv.us

Nye County Regulatory/Licensing Advisor
18160 Cottonwood Rd. #265
Sunriver, OR 97707
Malachy Murphy, Esq.
mrmurphy@chamberscable.com

Nye Co. Nuclear Waste Repository Project Office
2101 E. Calvada Boulevard, Suite 100
Pahrump, NV 89048
Celeste Sandoval, Quality Assurance Records Spec.
csandoval@co.nye.nv.us

Counsel for Lincoln County, Nevada
Whipple Law Firm
1100 S. Tenth Street
Las Vegas, NV 89017
Annie Bailey, Legal Assistant
baileys@lcturbonet.com
Adam L. Gill, Esq.
adam.whipplelaw@yahoo.com
Eric Hinckley, Law Clerk
erichinckley@yahoo.com
Bret Whipple, Esq.
bretwhipple@nomademail.com

Lincoln County District Attorney
P. O. Box 60
Pioche, NV 89403
Gregory Barlow, Esq.
lcta@lcturbonet.com

Lincoln County Nuclear Oversight Program
P.O. Box 1068
Caliente, NV 89008
Connie Simkins, Coordinator
jcciac@co.lincoln.nv.us

For Lincoln County, Nevada
Intertech Services Corporation
PO Box 2008
Carson City, NV 89702
Mike Baughman, Consultant
mikebaughman@charter.net

Counsel for Nye, County, Nevada
601 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
North Building, Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20004
Robert Andersen, Esq.
randersen@clarkhill.com
Christopher Clare, Esq.
cclare@clarkhill.com

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Clark County, Nevada
500 S. Grand Central Parkway
Las Vegas, NV 98155
Phil Klevatorick, Sr. Mgmt Analyst
klevatorick@clarkcountynv.gov
Elizabeth A. Vibert, Deputy District Attorney
Elizabeth.Vibert@ccdavn.com

Counsel for Eureka County, Nevada
Harmon, Curran, Speilberg & Eisenberg, LLP
1726 M. Street N.W., Suite 600
Washington, DC 20036
Diane Curran, Esq.
dcurran@harmoncurran.com

Eureka County, Nevada
Office of the District Attorney
701 S. Main Street, Box 190
Eureka, NV 89316-0190
Theodore Beutel, District Attorney
tbeutel.ecda@eurekanv.org

Nuclear Waste Advisory for Eureka
County, Nevada
1983 Maison Way
Carson City, NV 89703
Abigail Johnson, Consultant
eurekanrc@gmail.com

For White Pine County, Nevada
Intertech Services Corporation
PO Box 2008
Carson City, NV 89702
Mike Baughman, Consultant
mikebaughman@charter.net

For Eureka County, Nevada
NWOP Consulting, Inc.
1705 Wildcat Lane
Ogden, UT 84403
Loreen Pitchford, Consultant
lpitchford@comcast.net

Eureka County Public Works
PO Box 714
Eureka, NV 89316
Ronald Damele, Director
rdamele@eurekanv.org

Counsel for Churchill, Esmeralda, Lander,
and Mineral Counties, Nevada

Armstrong Teasdale, LLP
1975 Village Center Circle, Suite 140
Las Vegas, NV 89134-6237
Tara Baugh
tbaugh@armstrongteasdale.com

Kolesar & Leatham
1975 Village Center Circle, Suite 140
Las Vegas, NV 89134
Robert F. List, Esq.
rlist@klnevada.com

Esmeralda County Repository Oversight Program-
Yucca Mountain Project
PO Box 490
Goldfield, NV 89013
Edwin Mueller, Director
muellered@msn.com

Mineral County Nuclear Projects Office
P.O. Box 1600
Hawthorne, NV 89415
Linda Mathias, Director
yuccainfo@mineralcountynv.org

For Lincoln and White Pine County, Nevada
Jason Pitts, LSN Administrator
P.O. Box 126
Caliente, NV 89008
jayson@idtservices.com

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY (High Level Waste Repository) Docket No. 63-001-HLW
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For White Pine County, Nevada
Kelly Brown, District Attorney
801 Clark Street, Suite 3
Ely, NV 89301
kbrown@mwpower.net

California Energy Commission
1516 Ninth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814
Kevin, W. Bell, Senior Staff Counsel
kwbell@energy.state.ca.us

White Pine Co. Nuclear Waste Project Ofc
959 Campton Street
Ely, NV 89301
Mike Simon, Director
wpnucwst1@mwpower.net

California Department of Justice
Office of the Attorney General
1300 I Street, PO Box 944255
Sacramento, CA 94244-2550
Michele Mercado, Analyst
michele.Mercado@doj.ca.gov

Counsel for Inyo County, California
Gregory L. James, Attorney at Law
712 Owens Gorge Road
HC 79, Box
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546
E-Mail: gljames@earthlink.net

California Department of Justice
Office of the Attorney General
1515 Clay Street, 20th Fl, PO Box 70550
Oakland, CA 94612-0550
Timothy E. Sullivan, Deputy Attorney General
timothy.Sullivan@doj.ca.gov

Counsel for Inyo County, California
Law Office of Michael Berger
479 El Sueno Road
Santa Barbara, CA 93110
Michael Berger, Esq.
michael@lawofficeofmichaelberger.com
Robert Hanna, Esq.
robert@lawofficeofmichaelberger.com

California Department of Justice
Office of the Attorney General
300 S. Spring Street, Suite 1702
Los Angeles, CA 90013
Brian Hembacher, Deputy Attorney General
brian.hembacher@doj.ca.gov

Inyo Co Yucca Mtn Repository Assessment Ofc
P. O. Box 367
Independence, CA 93526-0367
Cathreen Richards, Associate Planner
crichards@inyocounty.us

Counsel for State of South Carolina
Davidson & Lindemann, P.A.
1611 Devonshire Drive
P.O. Box 8568
Columbia, SC 29202
Kenneth P. Woodington, Esq.
kwoodington@dml-law.com

Counsel for State of Washington
Office of the Attorney General
P. O. Box 40117
Olympia, WA 98504-0117
Todd R. Bowers, Esq.
toddb@atg.wa.gov
Andrew A. Fitz, Esq.
andyf@atg.wa.gov
Michael L. Dunning, Esq.
michaeld@atg.wa.gov
H. Lee Overton, Esq.
leo1@atg.wa.gov
Danielle French, Esq.
daniellef@atg.wa.gov
Teresa Trippel, Esq.
teresat@atg.wa.gov

Counsel for Aiken County, SC
Haynsworth Sinkler Boyd, PA
1201 Main Street, Suite 2200
P. O. Box 11889
Columbia, SC 29211-1889
Thomas R. Gottshall, Esq.
tgottshall@hsblawfirm.com
Ross Shealy, Esq.
rshealy@hsblawfirm.com

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Florida Public Service Commission
Office of the General Counsel
2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32303
Cynthia Miller, Esq.
cmiller@psc.state.fl.us

Counsel for Native Community Action Council
Alexander, Berkey, Williams & Weathers LLP
2030 Addison Street, Suite 410
Berkeley, CA 94704
Curtis G. Berkey, Esq.
cberkey@abwwlaw.com
Rovianne A. Leigh, Esq.
rleigh@abwwlaw.com
Scott W. Williams, Esq.
swilliams@abwwlaw.com

Native Community Action Council
P.O. Box 140
Baker, NV 89311
Ian Zabarte, Member of Board of Directors
mrizabarte@gmail.com

Counsel for Prairie Island Indian Community
Public Law Resource Center PLLC
505 N. Capitol Avenue
Lansing, MI 48933
Don L. Keskey, Esq.
donkeskey@publiclawresourcecenter.com

Prairie Island Indian Community Legal Department
5636 Sturgeon Lake Road
Welch, MN 55089
Philip R. Mahowald, Esq.
pmahowald@piic.org

Nuclear Energy Institute
Office of the General Counsel
1776 I Street, NW Suite 400
Washington, DC 20006-3708
Jerry Bonanno, Esq.
jxb@nei.org
Anne W. Cottingham, Esq.
awc@nei.org
Ellen C. Ginsberg, Esq.
ecg@nei.org

Counsel for Nuclear Energy Institute
Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP
2300 N Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20037-1122
Jay E. Silberg, Esq.
jay.silberg@pillsburylaw.com
Timothy J.V. Walsh, Esq.
timothy.walsh@pillsburylaw.com

Counsel for Nuclear Energy Institute
Winston & Strawn LLP
1700 K Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20006-3817
William A. Horin, Esq.
whorin@winston.com
Rachel Miras-Wilson, Esq.
rwilson@winston.com
David A. Repka, Esq.
drepka@winston.com
Carlos L. Sisco, Senior Paralegal
csisco@winston.com

Counsel for National Association of Regulatory
Utility Commissioners (NARUC)
1101 Vermont Avenue, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20005
James Ramsay, Esq.
jramsay@naruc.org
Robin Lunt, Esq.
rlunt@naruc.org

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY (High Level Waste Repository) Docket No. 63-001-HLW
**COMMISSION MEMORANDUM AND ORDER CLI-14-01, "DECISION ON STATE OF NEVADA REQUEST
FOR CLARIFICATION AND 'FIVE PARTIES' REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION"**

Counsel for Joint Timbisha Shoshone Tribal Group
Fredericks, Peebles, & Morgan LLP
1001 Second St.
Sacramento, CA 95814
Felicia M. Brooks, Data Administrator
fbrooks@ndnlaw.com
Ross D. Colburn, Law Clerk
rcolburn@ndnlaw.com
Sally Eredia, Legal Secretary
seredia@ndnlaw.com
Darcie L. Houck, Esq.
dhouck@ndnlaw.com
Brian Niegemann, Office Manager
bniegemann@ndnlaw.com
John M. Peebles, Esq.
jpeebles@ndnlaw.com
Robert Rhoan, Esq.
rrhoan@ndnlaw.com

Fredericks, Peebles, & Morgan LLP
3610 North 163rd Plaza
Omaha, NE 68116
Shane Thin Elk, Esq.
sthinelk@ndnlaw.com

For Joint Timbisha Shoshone Tribal Group
Indian Village Road, P.O. Box 206
Death Valley, CA 92328-0206
Joe Kennedy, Executive Director
joekennedy08@live.com
Tameka Vazquez, Bookkeeper
purpose_driven12@yahoo.com

[Original Signed by Brian Newell _____]
Office of the Secretary of the Commission

Dated at Rockville, Maryland
this 24th day of January, 2014