



**COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS
YUCCA MOUNTAIN PROJECT
LANDER COUNTY, NEVADA**

June 2009

**Prepared For:
Lander County
Board of County Commissioners**

**Prepared By:
Lander County
Nuclear Waste Project Office
and Lander County High Schools
Austin and Battle Mountain**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The characterization of Yucca Mountain as a potential site for the first high-level nuclear repository is opposed by the State of Nevada. Responses to surveys conducted by the State of Nevada (most recently 2006) suggest that roughly 70 percent of Nevada residents who vote against a repository if they actually had a chance to vote on the project. State survey results primarily reflect the opinions of Clark County residents.

The State survey was intended to represent the views of the State in general, but provides little or no insight about the opinions and beliefs held by Lander County residents with respect to the repository program. In 2006 Lander County began an effort to track public opinion.

As part of their impact assessment and oversight programs, Several Counties initiated community surveys to gage opinions about the Yucca Mountain Project and nuclear power. Survey questions were directly related to the Yucca Mountain project and more generally related to nuclear energy, and transportation of nuclear waste to Yucca Mountain. Several years of community survey results are available for comparison and trend analysis. Additionally, the Survey data collected in Nevada can be compared against survey responses to national survey efforts. The Nuclear Energy Institute has more than a decade of monitoring public perspectives on nuclear energy, storage of waste and waste transportation.

The comparison and trend analysis of survey responses are intended to achieve the following:

- Identify trends in views of toward nuclear power, transportation and waste storage;
- Compare national survey results against community survey results in Mineral, Lander, Churchill and Esmeralda Counties; and,
- Determine the extent to which trends in the four communities are similar to those found in national survey results.

1.2 Summary of Findings

This section summarizes the responses from the 2009 Yucca Mountain community survey. Lander County High School students completed a total of 464 surveys. Approximately 94 percent of the survey respondents were familiar with the Yucca Mountain Project and the federal government's efforts to store spent nuclear fuel in Nevada (Table 2-1).

Lander County survey respondents were asked whether they are in favor or opposed to a nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. Approximately 52 percent of survey

respondents were in favor of a repository (Table 2-2). Using this response as a base comparison, survey respondents were then told that increasing energy production requires a permanent geologic repository at Yucca Mountain. They were told a repository could also reduce the Nation's energy costs and dependence on foreign energy sources. Knowing this would survey respondents be in favor or opposed to repository. Approximately 63.4 percent of Lander County survey respondents would favor a repository at Yucca Mountain (Table 2-3). Tying Yucca Mountain to energy production influences favorable opinions of the project.

Almost 73.7 percent of community survey respondents either strongly favored or somewhat favored nuclear energy as one of the ways to provide electricity in the United States (Table 2-4). The percent of Lander County survey respondents favoring nuclear energy as a means to provide electricity is similar to national survey results (Figure 3-1). In 2008, national surveys showed a surge in support for nuclear energy. Approximately 74 percent of national survey respondents either strongly supported or somewhat supported nuclear energy as one of the ways to provide electricity. It is not surprising to see a jump of 10 percent from 64 percent in 2008 to 74 percent in 2009 in support of nuclear power among Lander County residents.

The vast majority of survey respondents believe that nuclear power and Yucca Mountain play a critical role in the Nation's energy future, they are equally convinced that radioactive waste can be transported safely to Yucca Mountain. Just over 61 percent of respondents were very confident or somewhat confident that waste could be transported safely (Table 2-5).

Respondents were then told about the safety record of nuclear waste shipments in the United States over the last 35 years. After hearing the safety record, nearly 68 percent of survey respondent became more confident in the safety of nuclear waste shipments (Table 2-6). Confidence among survey respondents in the safety of waste shipments from over the last two years has remained high.

Just over 72 percent of the 2009 survey respondents strongly favored or somewhat favored building new nuclear power plants to reduce reliance on oil and coal (Table 2-7). Lander County respondents viewed the construction of nuclear power plants more favorably as compared to the nation as a whole. There was little change in support for new nuclear power plants among Lander County survey respondents from 2008 to 2009.

Lander County survey respondents continue to support efforts to establish a benefits package for Nevada. An overwhelming majority of survey respondents (93.6%) support a benefits package (Table 2-8).

2.0 SURVEY RESULTS

2.1 Community Survey Results

This section contains community survey results for Lander County. A complete community survey can be found in Appendix A. Survey respondents were first asked whether or not they were familiar with the Yucca Mountain Project. With 94 percent of survey respondents being familiar with the Yucca Mountain project, Lander County continues to demonstrate strong awareness of the project. Frequency tabulations are shown for each survey question.

Question Are you familiar with the Yucca Mountain Project and the federal government's efforts to store spent nuclear fuel in Nevada?

Table 2-1		
Survey Respondent		
Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	430	94.0
No	28	6.0

Question 1. Are you in favor or opposed to a nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada?

Table 2-2		
Survey Respondent		
Response	Frequency	Percent
In Favor	235	52.0
Opposed	217	48.0

Question 2. Increasing energy production requires a permanent geologic repository at Yucca Mountain. It could also reduce the Nation’s energy costs and dependence on foreign energy sources. Knowing this would you be in favor or opposed to a repository?

Table 2-3		
Survey Respondent		
Response	Frequency	Percent
In Favor	286	63.4
Opposed	165	36.6

Question 3. Do you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose the use of nuclear energy as one of the ways to provide electricity in the United States?

Table 2-4		
Survey Respondent		
Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Favor	163	36.5
Somewhat Favor	166	37.2
Somewhat Oppose	80	17.9
Strongly Oppose	37	8.4

Lander County survey respondents show the same level of support for nuclear energy as national survey respondents. In 2008, 74 percent of national survey respondents strongly favored or somewhat favored nuclear energy.

Question 4 How confident are you that radioactive waste from America’s nuclear power plants will be transported safely to the Yucca Mountain disposal site? Are you very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not confident at all?

Table 2-5		Survey Respondent	
Response	Frequency	Percent	
Very Confident	127	28.1	
Somewhat Confident	149	33.0	
Not too confident	109	24.1	
Not confident at all	67	14.8	

Question 5 Radioactive waste is transported in rugged vault-like containers, under strict regulations, using cautious procedures, and in collaboration with state agencies. In the past 35 years, there have been more than 3,000 shipments of this radioactive waste across a total of nearly 2 million miles, and no radiation leaks. After hearing this statement, how confident are you that the radioactive waste from America’s nuclear power plants will be transported safely to the proposed Yucca Mountain disposal site?

Table 2-6		Survey Respondent	
Response	Frequency	Percent	
Very Confident	147	32.5	
Somewhat Confident	160	35.2	
Not too Confident	100	22.1	
Not Confident at All	46	10.1	

Question 6 Please tell me if you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose building new nuclear power plants to reduce reliance on oil or coal?

Table 2-7 Survey Respondent		
Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	172	37.8
Agree	156	34.3
Disagree	79	17.4
Strongly Disagree	48	10.5

Question 7 Should Nevada receive a benefits package or compensation from the federal government, if the Yucca Mountain Project is built?

Table 2-8 Survey Respondent		
Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	427	93.6
No	29	6.4

Question 8 Age of Respondent (survey respondent)

Table 2-9 Survey Respondents		
Response		
Average Age	46.5 yrs	
Median Age	50 yrs	
55 year or older	119	29.5
25 to 55 years old	235	58.2
Less than 25 years	50	12.3

Question 9 Household Size

Table 2-10		Survey Respondent	
Response	Frequency	Percent	
1 person	72	15.5	
2 person	164	36.4	
3 person	53	11.8	
4 person	89	19.7	
More than 4 persons	73	16.2	

Question 10 Length of Residency in Lander County

Table 2-11		Lander County Survey Respondents	
Response			
Average Length	22.9 yrs		
Median Length	20 yrs		
1-10 years	112	24.6	
10-20 years	140	30.7	
More than 20 years	204	44.7	

Question 11 Sex of Respondent

Table 2-12		Lander County Survey Respondent	
Response	Frequency	Percent	
Male	219	49.1	
Female	237	50.9	

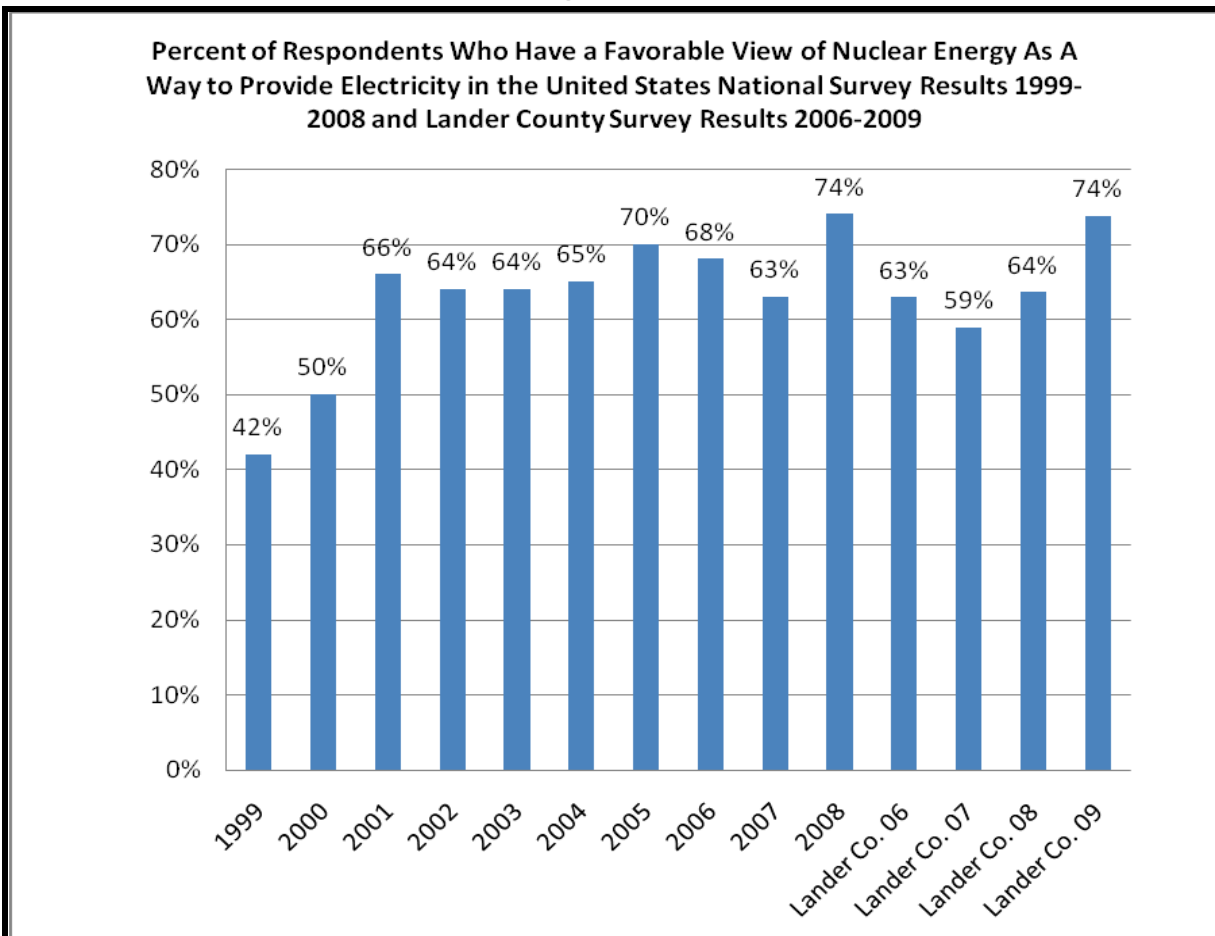
3.0 COMPARISON OF SURVEY RESPONSES

Section 3.0 compares the result of the 2009 Lander County survey to national survey responses and responses from other Nevada counties. The Nuclear Energy Institute conducted a number of survey efforts related to Yucca Mountain and nuclear energy use over the last several years. Among national and Lander County survey respondents, support for nuclear power remains strong.

Question:

Do you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose the use of nuclear energy as one of the ways to provide electricity in the United States?

Figure 3-1



As compared to national survey results, Lander County survey respondents have a slightly less favorable view of nuclear energy as a source of electricity in the United States. Overall, there is an increasing favorable view of nuclear energy among national and Lander County survey respondents.

Question Radioactive waste is transported in rugged vault-like containers under strict regulations using cautious procedures, and in collaboration with state agencies. In the past 35 years, there have been more than 3,000 shipments of radioactive waste across a total of nearly 2 million miles, and no radiation leaks.

After hearing this statement how confident are you that the radioactive waste from America’s nuclear power plants will be transported safely to the proposed Yucca Mountain disposal site?

Table 3-1	2009 Lander County Survey		2008 Lander County Survey		2007 Lander County Survey	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Response						
Very Confident	147	32.5	137	30.2	88	21.5
Somewhat Confident	160	35.2	161	35.5	166	40.5
Not Too Confident	100	22.1	92	20.3	88	21.5
Not confident at all	46	10.1	63	13.9	68	16.6

In 2009 over two-thirds of Lander County survey respondents were very confident and somewhat confident that waste could be transported safely to Yucca Mountain. There appears to be an increasing confidence to ship nuclear waste.

Appendix A: Survey

Lander County is conducting this survey as part of its oversight responsibilities of the Yucca Mountain project. Funding for the survey is provided by the Yucca Mountain Oversight Program. Lander County High School students have volunteered to conduct this survey.

Survey # _____

I would like to begin by asking the following questions:

Are you familiar with the Yucca Mountain Project and the federal government's efforts to store spent nuclear fuel in Nevada?

Yes _____

No _____

Question 1.

Are you in favor or opposed to a nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada?

In Favor _____

Opposed _____

If you responded "In Favor" skip to Question 3

Question 2

Increasing nuclear energy production requires a permanent geologic repository at Yucca Mountain. It could also reduce the Nation's energy costs and dependence on foreign energy sources. Knowing this would you be in favor or opposed to a repository ?

In Favor _____

Opposed _____

Question 3:

Do you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose the use of nuclear energy as one of the ways to provide electricity in the United States?

- 1. Strongly Favor _____
- 2. Somewhat Favor _____
- 3. Somewhat Oppose _____
- 4. Strongly Oppose _____

Question 4:

How confident are you that radioactive waste from America's nuclear power plants will be transported safely to the Yucca Mountain disposal site. Are you very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not confident at all?

- 1. Very Confident _____
- 2. Somewhat Confident _____
- 3. Not too Confident _____
- 4. Not Confident at All _____

Question 5:

Radioactive waste is transported in rugged vault-like containers, under strict regulations, using cautious procedures, and in collaboration with state agencies. In the past 35 years, there have been more than 3,000 shipments of this radioactive waste across a total of nearly 2 million miles, and no radiation leaks. Yucca Mountain shipments will have security escorts, tracking systems and operate under reduced speeds.

After hearing this statement, how confident are you that the radioactive waste from America's nuclear power plants will be transported safely to the proposed Yucca Mountain disposal site? Are you very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not confident at all?

- 1. Very Confident _____
- 2. Somewhat Confident _____
- 3. Not too Confident _____
- 4. Not Confident at all _____

Question 6:

Please tell me if you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose building new nuclear power plants to reduce reliance on oil and coal?

- 1. Strongly favor _____
- 2. Somewhat favor _____
- 3. Somewhat oppose _____
- 4. Strongly oppose _____

Question 7:

Should Nevada receive a benefits package or compensation from the federal government, if the Yucca Mountain Project is built?

- 1. Yes _____
- 2. No _____

I. Demographic Questions-Survey Respondents

- 1. Age of Respondent (Survey respondent)_____Years
- 2. Total number of persons living in your household_____.
- 3. Length of residency in Lander County_____ years.
- 4. Male_____ Female_____