



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

**June 2007**

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

**Prepared By:  
Lander County  
Yucca Mountain Oversight Program**

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Community Survey Results  
Yucca Mountain Project  
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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 suggest that roughly 70 percent of Nevadans oppose the development of the repository at Yucca Mountain. The State survey results primarily reflect the opinions of Clark County, Nevada due to the population distribution in the State and the survey methodology. Over the last several years, Lander County has monitored local public opinion through a variety of survey efforts.

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. To date, Lander County has completed a number of public opinion surveys that provide somewhat different results using similar questions found in the State's survey.

As part of its impact assessment and oversight program of Yucca Mountain, Lander County initiated a new community survey using a revised set of questions that are substantially different from previous Yucca Mountain survey efforts. 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. The 2007 Survey questions can be found in Appendix A. Several of the questions used in this year's survey were the same as those used by the Nuclear Energy Institute to gauge public opinion about nuclear waste and nuclear energy.

### **1.2 Methodology**

Lander County High School students conducted approximately 425 face-to-face surveys in order to ascertain the views and knowledge of the repository program. This year Lander County survey focused on issues that have been the subject of national survey efforts related to Yucca Mountain. Lander County reviewed several national survey efforts and selected questions relevant to Yucca Mountain.

The purpose of using these questions is to compare Lander County survey responses with responses from a national survey sample. Using similar questions allows for comparability with other survey results concerning the Yucca Mountain project. Such comparisons can be found in Section 3.0 of this report.

### **1.3 Summary of Findings**

This section summarizes the responses from the 2007 Yucca Mountain community survey. Lander County High School students completed a total of 415 surveys. Almost 92 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).

Almost 59 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 2-2). The percent of Lander County survey respondents favoring nuclear energy as a means to provide electricity is slightly lower than findings of national survey efforts (Figure 3-1). In 2006, national surveys showed that approximately 68 percent of respondents either strongly supported or somewhat supported nuclear energy as one of the ways to provide electricity.

Similarly, the majority of Lander County respondents appear to support the construction of new nuclear power plants. In 2007, just over 53 percent of Lander County respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that more nuclear power plants should be built in the future (Table 2-3). Such a level of support is slightly below support shown in national survey responses. As recent as 2003, approximately 53.2 percent of national survey respondents either strongly favored or somewhat favored the development of new nuclear power plants (Figure 3-2). Almost 60 percent of survey respondents favored nuclear power as a means to reduce reliance on coal and gasoline (Table 2-4).

A vast majority (96 percent) of Lander County community survey respondents said it was extremely important or very important to have a clear plan of action for handling the high-level radioactive waste from America's 103 electricity-generating nuclear power plants (Table 2-5). The number of Lander County survey respondents who felt that having a clear plan for handling high-level nuclear waste was important, is similar to national survey responses (Figure 3-3).

Lander County survey respondents are becoming increasingly confident that spent nuclear fuel and high-level waste can be shipped safely. In 2007, approximately 51.2 percent of Lander County respondents were either very confident or somewhat confident that nuclear waste from America's nuclear power plants could be safely transported to Yucca Mountain (Table 2-6). Confidence rises to 62 percent when survey respondents were told about the safety record of national spent fuel shipments (Table 2-7).

Lander County survey respondents were also asked whether Nevada should receive a benefits package or compensation from the government if the Yucca Mountain project is built. An overwhelming majority (93.1%) supported a benefits package (Table 2-9).

Only 37 percent of respondents felt that shipping nuclear waste was safer than gasoline or other hazardous materials. Finally, about two-thirds of survey respondents were aware that DOE was evaluating a potential rail route through Battle Mountain.

The results of the survey appear to have changed somewhat from last year. The change in views towards safety of waste shipments and acceptance of nuclear power could be influenced by a number of factors. This year, the survey had as many responses from southern Lander County as the Battle Mountain area. Views to nuclear power and the Yucca Mountain project can vary significantly from community to community. That appears to be the case with the 2007 survey. In 2007 Southern Lander County had more favorable views of nuclear power and transportation as compared to northern Lander County.

## 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. Almost 92 percent of survey respondents indicated that they were familiar with 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?

<b>Table 2-1</b>		
<b>Survey Respondent</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	378	91.8
No	34	8.2

Question 1. 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?

<b>Table 2-2</b>		
<b>Survey Respondent</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly Favor	92	22.4
Somewhat Favor	150	36.5
Somewhat Oppose	103	25.1
Strongly Oppose	66	16.1

Question 2. Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement: “We should definitely build more nuclear energy plants in the future?”

<b>Table 2-3</b>		
<b>Survey Respondents</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly Agree	100	24.3
Somewhat Agree	119	28.9
Somewhat Disagree	100	24.3
Strongly Disagree	93	22.6

Question 3. 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?

<b>Table 2-4</b>		
<b>Survey Respondent</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly Favor	113	27.7
Somewhat Favor	130	31.9
Somewhat Oppose	101	24.8
Strongly Oppose	64	15.7

Question 4. How important is it to have a clear plan of action for handling the high-level radioactive waste from America’s 103 electricity-generating nuclear energy plants? Is it extremely important, very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important?”

<b>Table 2-5</b>		
<b>Survey Respondent</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Extremely Important	313	76.9
Very Important	51	12.5
Somewhat Important	33	8.2
Not Very Important	5	1.2
Not at All Important	5	1.2

Question 5 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?

<b>Table 2-6</b>		<b>Survey Respondent</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	
Very Confident	68	16.7	
Somewhat Confident	143	35.1	
Not too confident	106	26.1	
Not confident at all	90	22.1	

Question 6 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?

<b>Table 2-7</b>		<b>Survey Respondent</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	
Very Confident	88	21.5	
Somewhat Confident	166	40.5	
Not too Confident	88	21.5	
Not Confident at All	68	16.6	

Question 7 Would you say you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the statement, “ there is more risk in shipping high-level radioactive waste than shipping gasoline or other industrial chemicals”?

<b>Table 2-8</b>		<b>Survey Respondent</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	
Strongly Agree	127	31.2	
Agree	131	32.2	
Disagree	101	24.8	
Strongly Disagree	48	11.8	

Question 8 Should Nevada receive a benefits package or compensation from the federal government, if the Yucca Mountain Project is built?

<b>Table 2-9</b>		<b>Survey Respondent</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	
Yes	380	93.1	
No	28	6.9	

Question 9 Are you familiar with the Department of Energy’s plans to evaluate a potential rail shipping route through Lander County to Yucca Mountain for the purpose of transporting nuclear waste?

<b>Table 2-10</b>		<b>Survey Respondent</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	
Yes	277	67.6	
No	133	32.4	

Question 10 Age of Respondent (survey respondent)

<b>Table 2-11</b>		<b>Survey Respondents</b>	
<b>Response</b>			
Average Age	48.5 yrs		
Median Age	48 yrs		
55 year or older	146	36.2	
25 to 55 years old	228	56.6	
Less than 25 years	29	7.2	

Question 11 Household Size

<b>Table 2-12</b>		<b>Survey Respondent</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	
1 person	65	16.0	
2 person	141	34.6	
3 person	46	11.3	
4 person	69	17.0	
More than 4 persons	86	21.1	

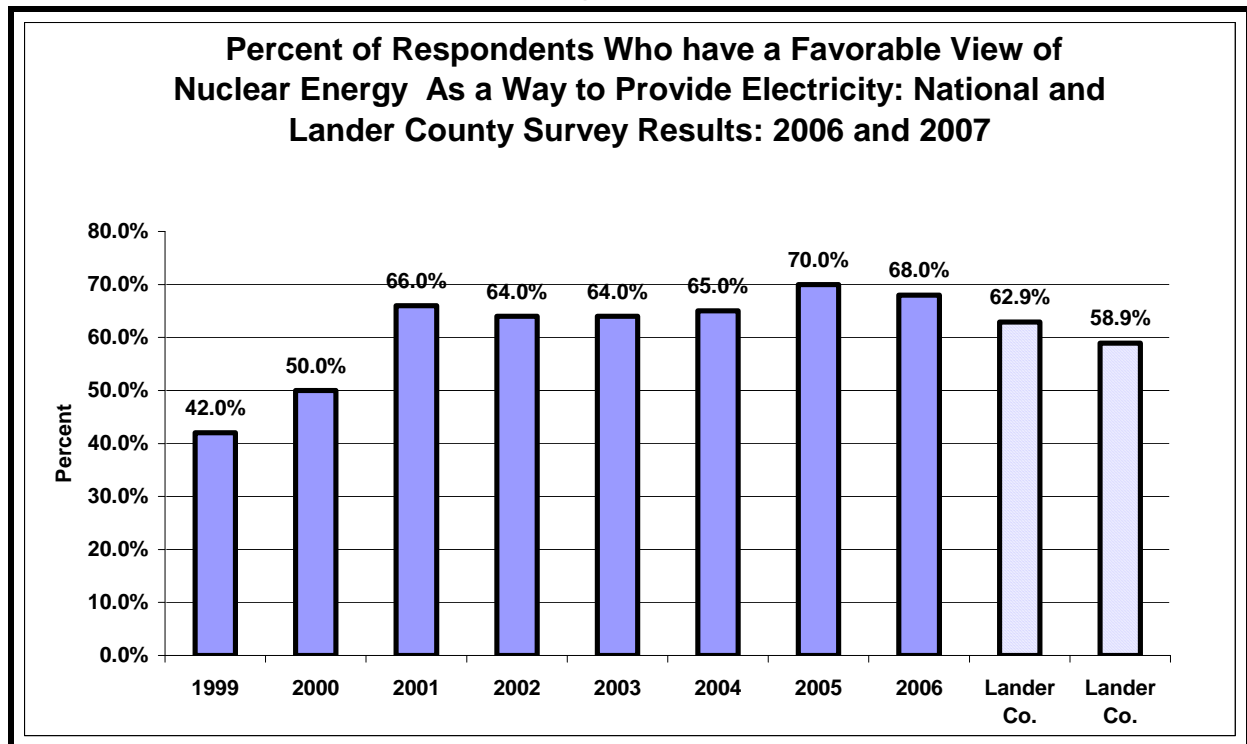
### 3.0 COMPARISON TO NATIONAL SURVEY RESPONSES

Section 3.0 compares the result of the 2007 Lander County survey to national survey responses. The Nuclear Energy Institute conducted a number of survey efforts related to Yucca Mountain and nuclear energy use over the last several years.

#### 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**



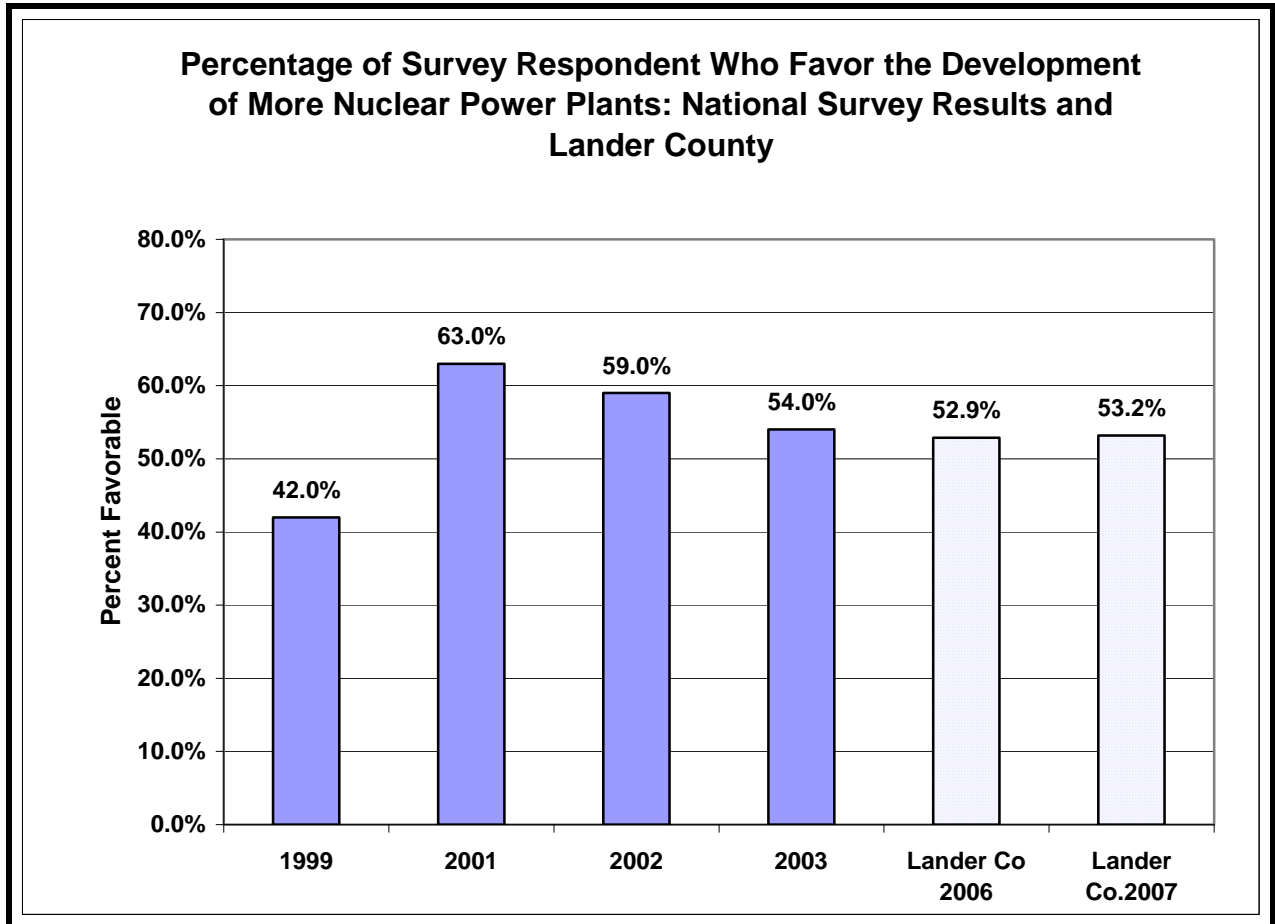
Source: NEI, 1998-2005, Lander County, 2007

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.

**Question:**

Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement: “We should definitely build more nuclear energy plants in the future?”

**Figure 3-2**



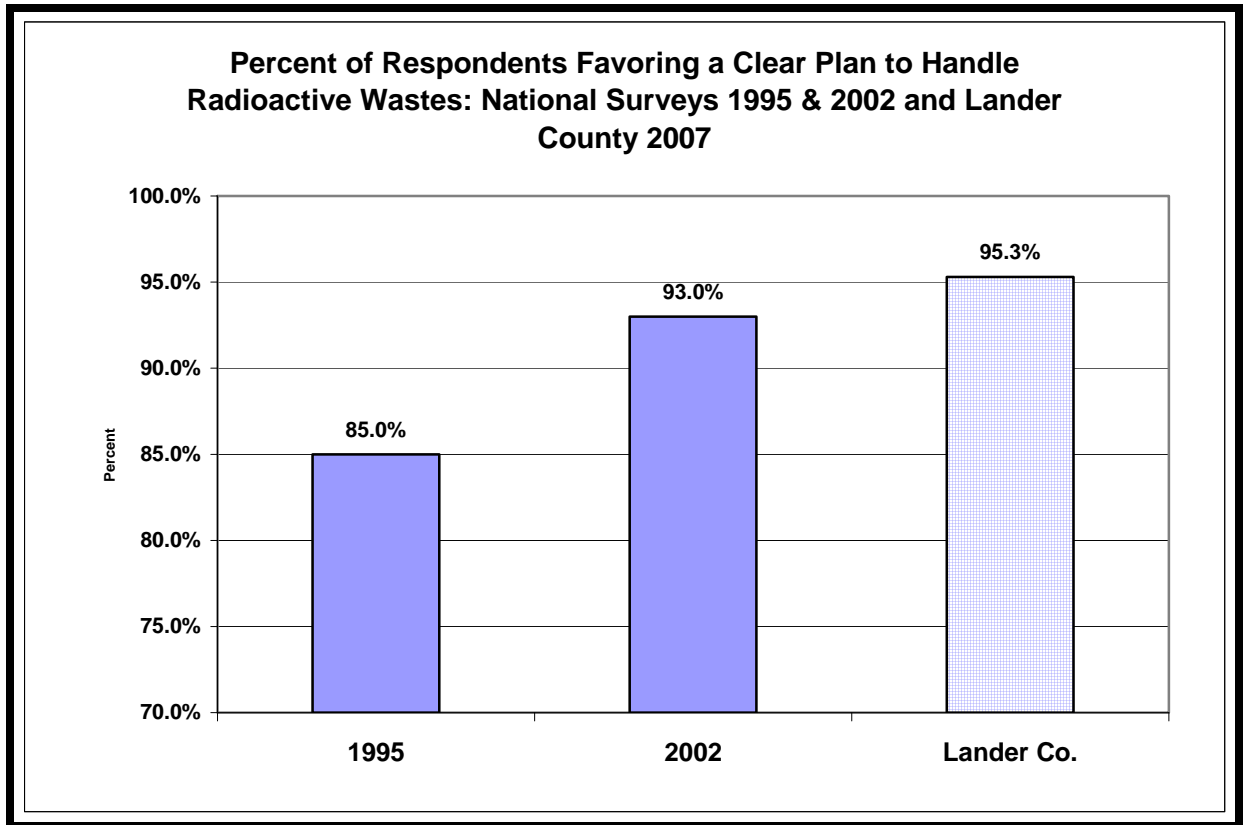
Source: NEI, 1998-2005, Lander County, 2006 and 2007

Lander County respondents tend to hold a similar level of support for the development of more nuclear power plants.

**Question:**

How important is it to have a clear plan of action for handling the high-level radioactive waste from America's 103 electricity-generating nuclear energy plants? Is it extremely important, very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important?

**Figure 3-3**



Source: NEI, 1998-2005, Lander County, 2007

Section 3.0 also compares the results from the 2006 Lander County community survey against the results from previous community survey efforts, specifically those from the 2005 Business Survey, and 2003 Community Survey.

**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 for 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?

<b>Table 3-1</b>	<b>2007 Lander County Survey</b>		<b>2006 Lander County Survey</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Confident	88	21.5	80	22.7
Somewhat Confident	166	40.5	137	38.8
Not Too Confident	88	21.5	84	23.8
Not confident at all	68	16.6	52	14.7

**Question** Do you think it is possible for the state, tribal and local governments to continue to challenge the Yucca Mountain Project while developing a benefits package for Nevada?

<b>Table 3-2</b>	<b>2003 Lander County Community Survey</b>		<b>2006 Lander County Community</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	121	31.8	154	43.6
No	203	53.3	66	18.7
Don't Know	57	14.9	133	37.7

In 2007 over 93.1 percent of Lander County respondents believe that the State of Nevada should receive a benefits package or compensation from the federal government if the Yucca Mountain project is built.

## Appendix A: Survey

Lander is conducting this survey as part of its oversight responsibilities of the Yucca Mountain project. The survey is intended to determine the views Lander County residents. Funding for the survey is provided by a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy. Battle Mountain High School students have volunteered to conduct this survey. All Responses will remain confidential.

Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

### Question 1:

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

1. Yes \_\_\_\_\_

2. No \_\_\_\_\_

### Question 2:

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 3:**

Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement: "We should definitely build more nuclear energy plants in the future?"

- 1. Strongly Agree \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Somewhat Agree \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Somewhat disagree \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Strongly disagree \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 4:**

How important is it to have a clear plan of action for handling the high-level radioactive waste from America's 103 electricity-generating nuclear energy plants? Is it extremely important, very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important?"

- 1. Extremely Important \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Very Important \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Somewhat Important \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Not Very Important \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Not at all important \_\_\_\_\_

**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?

- 1. very confident \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. somewhat confident \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. not too confident \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. not confident at all \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 6:**

Do you think it is possible for the state, tribal and local governments to continue challenge the Yucca Mountain Project while developing a benefits package for Nevada?

- 1 Yes \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 No \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 Don't Know \_\_\_\_\_

**Demographic Questions**

- D1. Age of Respondent (Survey respondent) \_\_\_\_\_ Years
- D2. Total number of persons living in your household \_\_\_\_\_.
- D3. Sex of respondent \_\_\_\_\_.
- D4. How long have you lived in Lander County  
Less than 5 yrs  
\_\_\_\_\_ 5-10 yrs  
\_\_\_\_\_ 10 or more yrs.