



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

June 2011

**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 its impact assessment and oversight program, Lander County initiated a community survey to gauge 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. The 2011 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. Additionally, survey questions #2 and #3 were changed to focused on the Yucca Mountain licensing process.

1.2 Methodology

Lander County High School students randomly selected 455 local residents in order to ascertain the views and knowledge of the repository program. This year the 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. Lander County High School Students completed survey interview questions by phone and face to face interviews.

When available the Lander County survey responses for various years will be compared with responses from national survey efforts. 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 2011 Yucca Mountain community survey. Lander County High School students completed a total of 455 surveys. Approximately 90 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).

Mineral County survey respondents were asked whether they are in favor or opposed to a nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. Approximately 54.4 percent of survey respondents are in favor of a repository at Yucca Mountain (Table 2-2). An even higher percentage of survey respondents want to see the Yucca Mountain licensing review continue (Table 2-3). Approximately 71 percent of survey respondents want the license review to continue. The number supporting the Yucca Mountain licensing review jumps to 79 percent when licensing is linked to construction of new nuclear power plants and the nation's future energy needs (Table 2-4).

As seen in last year's results, tying Yucca Mountain to energy production influences favorable opinions of the project. In last year's community survey, support for Yucca Mountain grew substantially when the repository program was linked to economic growth and a reduction and global warming. Just over 80 percent of the respondents would favor a repository under those conditions.

Just over 68 percent of the 2011 community survey respondents were either strongly favored or somewhat favored nuclear energy as one of the ways to provide electricity in the United States (Table 2-5). 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 2009, national surveys showed a surge in support for nuclear energy. Approximately 74 percent of the national survey respondents either strongly supported or somewhat supported nuclear energy as one of the ways to provide electricity.

The 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. Approximately 64 percent of respondents were very confident or somewhat confident that waste could be transported safely (Table 2-6) in 2011.

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 70.7 percent of survey respondent became more confident in the safety of nuclear waste shipments (Table 2-7).

2.0 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 90 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	408	90.0
No	47	10.0

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	246	54.4
Opposed	206	45.6

Question 2. The Yucca Mountain repository is currently undergoing an extensive independent scientific review to determine if the site can be built and operated safely. After spending more than \$10 billion studying Yucca Mountain, the Obama Administration wants to terminate the repository project before completing the on-going independent scientific review.

Table 2-3		Survey Respondent	
Response	Frequency	Percent	
Continue the review	317	70.6	
Terminate the project	132	29.4	

Question 3. Terminating the Yucca Mountain Project now could result in substantial delays in the construction of new nuclear power plants and meeting the nation's future energy needs, and it will cost billions in additional government expenditures to develop a new site. Knowing this should the licensing review of Yucca Mountain continue or terminate?

Table 2-4		Survey Respondent	
Response	Frequency	Percent	
Continue the Review	354	78.8	
Terminate the Project	95	21.2	

Question 4. 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 2-5		Survey Respondent	
Response	Frequency	Percent	
Strongly Favor	153	34.0	
Somewhat Favor	155	34.4	
Somewhat Oppose	89	19.8	
Strongly Oppose	53	11.8	

Lander County survey respondents show the same level of support for nuclear energy as national survey respondents. In 2009, 70 percent of national survey respondents strongly favored or somewhat favored nuclear energy.

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?

Table 2-6 Survey Respondent		
Response	Frequency	Percent
Very Confident	134	29.8
Somewhat Confident	153	34.1
Not too confident	76	16.9
Not confident at all	86	19.2

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?

Table 2-7 Survey Respondent		
Response	Frequency	Percent
Very Confident	176	39.1
Somewhat Confident	142	31.6
Not too Confident	63	14.0
Not Confident at All	69	15.3

Question Age of Respondent (survey respondent)

Table 2-8 Survey Respondents		
Response	Frequency	Percent
Average Age	50.1 yrs	
Median Age	49 yrs	
55 year or older	164	36.2
25 to 55 years old	246	54.3
Less than 25 years	43	9.5

Question Length of Residency in Lander County

Table 2-9 Survey Respondents		
Response	Frequency	Percent
Average Length	22.9 yrs	
Median Length	18 yrs	
1-10 years	99	22.7
10-20 years	114	26.1
More than 20 years	224	51.3

Question Sex of Respondent

Table 2-10 Survey Respondent		
Response	Frequency	Percent
Male	210	46.3
Female	244	53.7

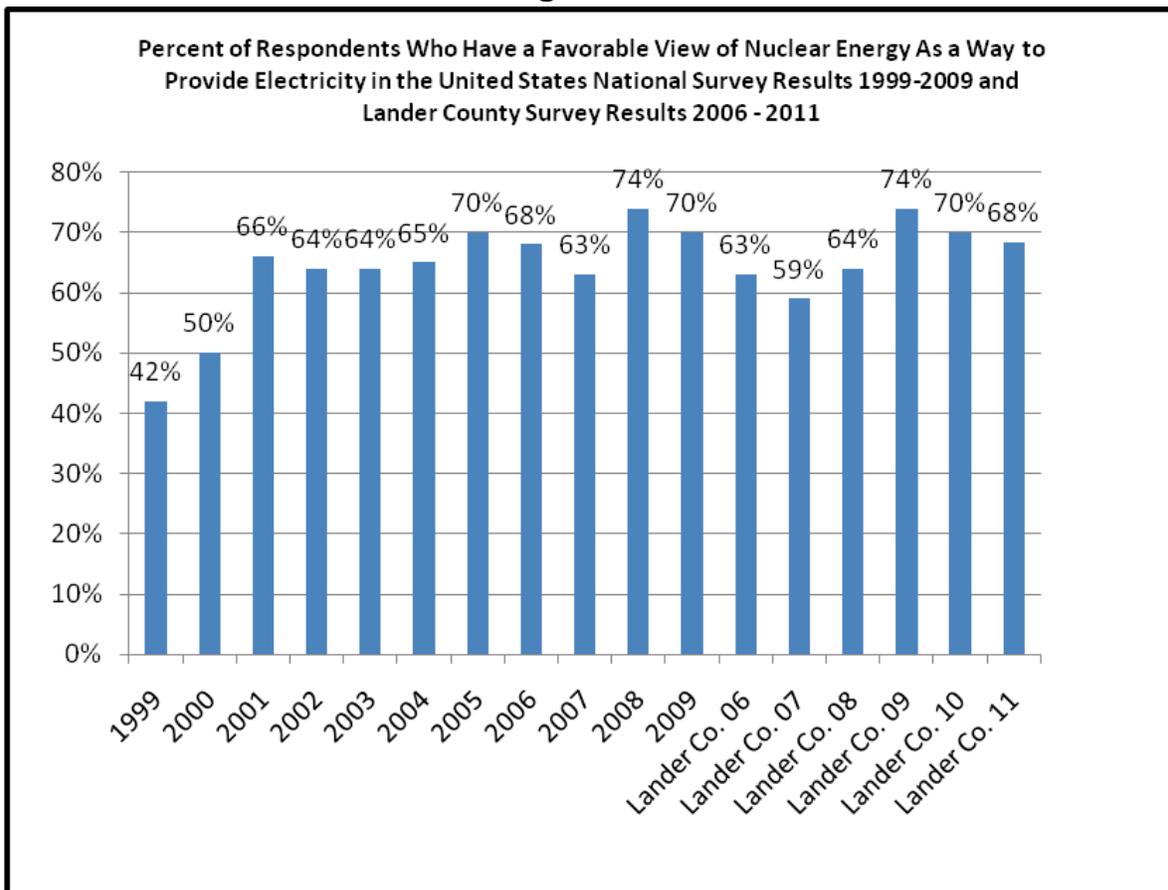
3.0 COMPARISON OF SURVEY RESPONSES

Section 3.0 compares the result of the 2010 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. Are you in favor or opposed to a nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada?

Table 3-1	2009 Lander County Survey		2010 Lander County Survey		2011 Lander County Survey	
Response	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
In Favor	235	52.0	237	48.6	246	54.4
Opposed	217	48.0	251	51.4	206	45.6

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?

Table 3-2	Lander County Survey 2011		Lander County Survey 2010		Lander County Survey 2009		Lander County Survey 2008	
Response	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
Very Confident								
Somewhat Confident	318	70.7	336	69.3	219	66.6	298	65.7
Not Too Confident								
Not Confident at All	132	19.3	149	30.7	110	33.4	155	34.2

In 2011 about 71 percent of Lander County survey respondents were very confident and somewhat confident that waste could be transported safely to Yucca Mountain. Survey respondents indicating that they were very confident to somewhat confident increased by about 5 percent from 2008 to 2011.

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. All responses will remain confidential.

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 _____

Question 2

The Yucca Mountain repository is currently undergoing an extensive independent scientific review to determine if the site can be built and operated safely. After spending more than \$10 billion studying Yucca Mountain, the Obama Administration wants to terminate the repository project before completing the on-going independent scientific review.

Should the licensing review be allowed to continue? _____

Or terminate the project and start over? _____

Question 3:

Terminating the Yucca Mountain Project now could result in substantial delays in the construction of new nuclear power plants and meeting the nation’s future energy needs, and it will cost billions in additional federal government expenditures to develop a new repository site. Knowing this should the licensing review of Yucca Mountain continue or terminate?

Continue the Review _____

Terminate the Project _____

Question 4:

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 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?

1. Very Confident _____

2. Somewhat Confident _____

3. Not too Confident _____

4. Not Confident at All _____

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. 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 _____

I. Demographic Questions-Survey Respondents

- 1. Age of Respondent (Survey respondent)_____Years
- 2. Length of residency in Lander County_____ years.
- 3. Male_____ Female_____