

# **Community Survey Results**

## **Yucca Mountain Project**

**June 2012**

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**Lander County**

**Board of County Commissioners**

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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 2007) suggest that roughly 70 percent of Nevada residents would vote against a repository if they actually had a chance to vote on the project. The State survey results primarily reflected the opinions of Clark County residents as few surveys were taken outside the area.

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. Since that time Lander County has compiled 7 years of survey data and responses from a random sample of registered voters.

As part of its impact assessment and oversight program, Lander County initiated a community survey to gage opinion 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 2012 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 gage public opinion about nuclear waste and nuclear energy. Additionally, survey questions #2 and #3 were changed to focused on the Yucca Mountain licensing process.

Lander County High School students randomly selected 390 registered voters 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 questions by phone and face to face interviews.

When available the Lander County survey responses from the last two 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.

## 1.2 Summary of Findings

This section summarizes the responses from the 390 Yucca Mountain community survey. Approximately 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). This result demonstrates a continuing familiarity with the proposed Yucca Mountain repository regardless of limited project related activity occurring in the last few years.

Lander County survey respondents were asked whether they are in favor or opposed to a nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. Just over 56 percent of survey respondents are in favor of a repository at Yucca Mountain (Table 2-2). The percentage of survey respondents who favor a repository at Yucca Mountain has increased over the last several years. An even higher percentage of survey respondents want to see the Yucca Mountain licensing review continue (Table 2-3). Approximately 76 percent of survey respondents want the license review to continue. The number of survey respondents supporting the Yucca Mountain licensing review jumps to 78.5 percent when licensing is linked to the cost of developing a new storage system somewhere other than Yucca Mountain. The high level of support for licensing suggests that survey respondents are sensitive to excessive and unnecessary government spending (Table 2-4).

Approximately 73.3 percent of survey respondents 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 respondents favoring nuclear energy increased from last year. 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 70 percent of national survey respondents strongly supported or somewhat supported nuclear energy as one of the ways to provide electricity in the United States.

The continued support of nuclear power by Lander County survey respondents suggests that events at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant in Japan, which occurred nearly a year ago had little impact. In Table 2-6 about 26 percent of survey respondents said that events in Japan last year influenced their opinion about nuclear power. However, the continued support for nuclear power among Lander County respondents remains strong. In 2012, just over 73.3 percent of respondents favored nuclear power. See Table 3-1 for a comparison of results.

## 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	357	91.5
No	33	8.5

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	216	56.3
Opposed	168	43.7

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 \$13 billion studying Yucca Mountain, the Obama Administration wants to terminate the repository project before completing the on-going independent scientific review. Knowing this, should the licensing review of Yucca Mountain continue or terminate?

<b>Table 2-3</b>		<b>Survey Respondent</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	
Continue the review	293	75.9	
Terminate the project	93	24.1	

Question 3. Terminating the Yucca Mountain Project now could result in substantial delays in the construction of new nuclear power plants and it may cost as much as \$100 billion in additional federal government expenditures to develop a new repository site. Knowing this, should the licensing review of Yucca Mountain continue or terminate?

<b>Table 2-4</b>		<b>Survey Respondent</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	
Continue the Review	299	78.1	
Terminate the Project	84	21.9	

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	232	59.5
Somewhat Favor	54	13.8
Somewhat Oppose	56	14.4
Strongly Oppose	48	12.3

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. Did the recent events (March 2011) at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant in Japan influence your opinion about the use and development of nuclear power in the United States?

Table 2-6 Survey Respondent		
Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	102	26.3
No	219	56.4
Not Sure	67	19.3

Question Age of Respondent (survey respondent)

Table 2-8 Survey Respondents		
Response	Frequency	Percent
Average Age of Respondent	49.5 yrs	
Median Age of Respondent	51 yrs	
55 year or older	164	42.2
25 to 55 years old	188	48.3
Less than 25 years	37	9.5

Question Length of Residency in Lander County

<b>Table 2-9</b>		<b>Survey Respondents</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	
Average Length of Residency	21.8 yrs		
Median Length of Residency	20 yrs		
1-10 years of Residency	110	28.2	
10-20 years of Residency	103	26.4	
More than 20 years of Residency	177	45.4	

Question Sex of Respondent

<b>Table 2-10</b>		<b>Survey Respondent</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	
Male	197	50.0	
Female	197	50.0	



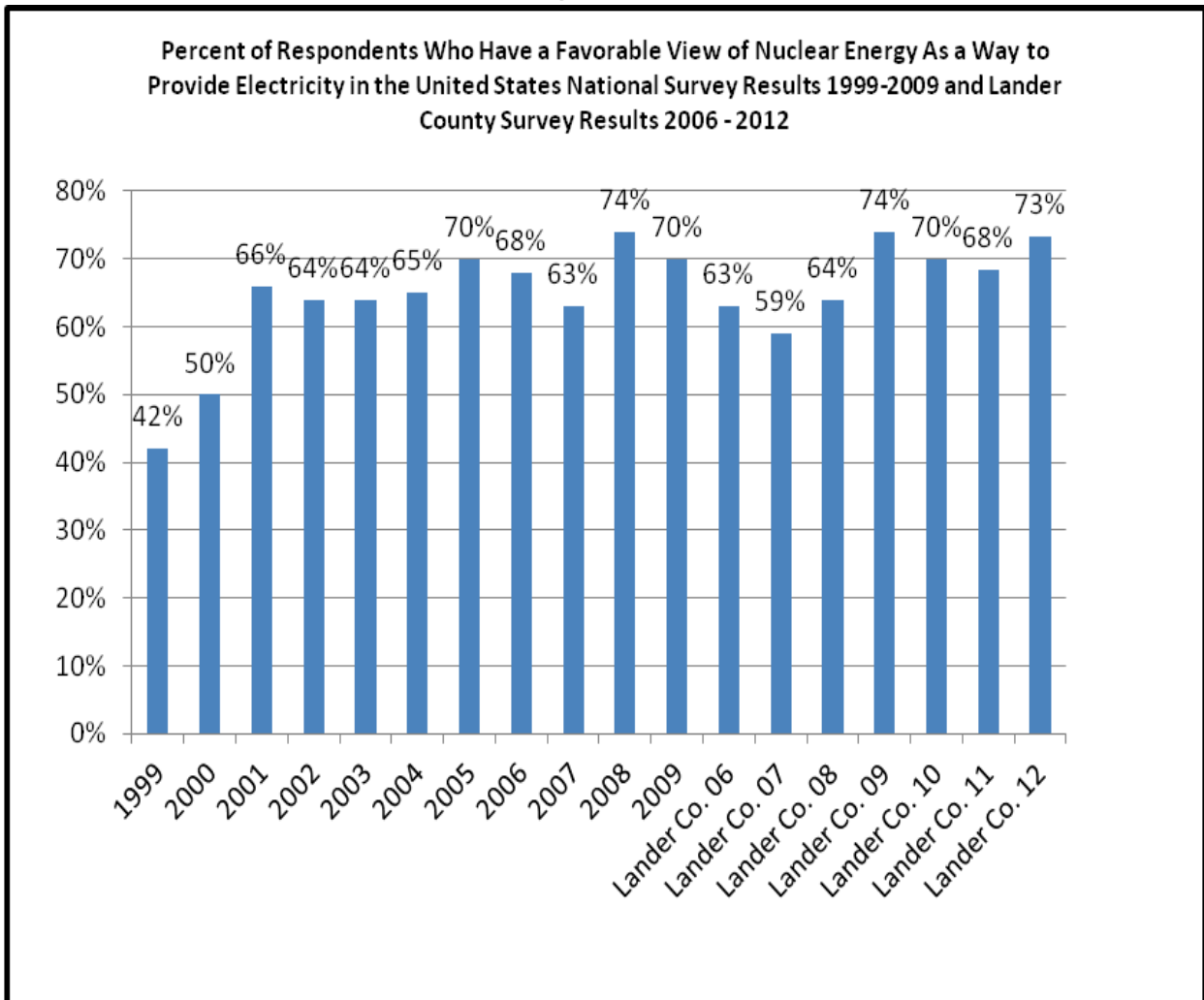
### 3.0 COMPARISON OF SURVEY RESPONSES

Section 3.0 compares the result of the 2012 Lander County survey to national survey responses and responses from previous survey efforts. The Nuclear Energy Institute conducted a number of surveys 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 Response	2009 Lander County Survey		2010 Lander County Survey		2011 Lander County Survey		2012 Lander County Survey	
	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
In Favor	235	52.0	237	48.6	246	54.4	216	56.3
Opposed	217	48.0	251	51.4	206	45.6	168	43.7

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

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.

**Question.** 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 \$13 billion studying Yucca Mountain, the Obama Administration wants to terminate the repository project before completing the on-going independent scientific review.

Table 3-3 Response	2011 Survey Lander Co.		2012 Survey Lander Co.	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Continue the Review	317	70.6%	293	76.5%
Terminate the Project	132	29.4%	93	23.5%

## 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 effort to store spent nuclear fuel in Nye County, Nevada?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

### Question 1:

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

1. In Favor \_\_\_\_\_

2. Opposed \_\_\_\_\_

### Question 2:

After spending more than \$13 billion studying Yucca Mountain, the Obama Administration is attempting to terminate the repository project before completing the on-going independent scientific review as mandated by federal law.

1. Should the licensing review continue? \_\_\_\_\_ (If "Yes" skip to Question #4)

2. Or should the project be terminated and start over? \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 3:**

Termination of the Yucca Mountain Project will result in delays in the construction of new nuclear power plants and it may cost as much as \$100 billion in additional federal government expenditures to develop a new repository site. Knowing this, should the licensing review of Yucca Mountain continue or terminate?

- 1. Continue the Review \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Terminate the Yucca Mountain \_\_\_\_\_

**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:**

Did the recent events (March 2011) of the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant in Japan influence your opinion about the use and development of nuclear power in the United States?

- 1. Yes \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. No \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Don't know \_\_\_\_\_

## **I. Demographic Questions-Survey Respondents**

1. Age of Respondent (Survey respondent)\_\_\_\_\_ Years

2. Length of residency in Lander County\_\_\_\_\_ years.

3. Male\_\_\_\_\_ Female\_\_\_\_\_