



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

June 2011

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

**Prepared By:
Churchill County
Nuclear Waste Project Office
and Churchill County High School
Advanced Placement Chemistry Class**

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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. The 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 Churchill County residents with respect to the repository program. In 2008 Churchill County began an effort to track public opinion.

As part of its impact assessment and oversight program, Churchill County initiated a community survey to gauge 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 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.

Churchill County High School students randomly selected 385 registered voters in order to ascertain the views and knowledge of the repository program. This year the Churchill County survey focused on issues that have been the subject of national survey efforts related to Yucca Mountain. Churchill County reviewed several national survey efforts and selected questions relevant to Yucca Mountain. Churchill County High School Students completed survey interview questions by phone and face to face interviews.

When available the Churchill 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 385 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).

Churchill County survey respondents were asked whether they are in favor or opposed to a nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. Approximately 55 percent of survey respondents are in favor of a repository at Yucca Mountain (Table 2-2). Those favoring the repository increased more than ten (10) percent over the 2009 results. An even higher percentage of survey respondents want to see the Yucca Mountain licensing review continue (Table 2-3). Approximately 60 percent of survey respondents want the license review to continue which is 5 percent higher than those supporting Yucca Mountain. The number supporting the Yucca Mountain licensing review jumps to 65 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 in global warming. Just over 80 percent of the respondents would favor a repository under those conditions.

Approximately 71 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 2-5). The percent of Churchill 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 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 62.3 percent of respondents were very confident or somewhat confident that waste could be transported safely (Table 2-6) in 2011, and increase in nearly 5 percent over 2010 results.

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 73 percent of survey respondent became more confident in the safety of nuclear waste shipments (Table 2-7). Confidence in the safety of waste shipments over the last two years has increased by almost 20 percent among Churchill County survey respondents.

2.0 SURVEY RESULTS

2.1 Community Survey Results

This section contains community survey results for Churchill 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. About 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?

Table 2-1		Survey Respondent	
Response	Frequency	Percent	
Yes	352	91.7	
No	32	8.3	

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	203	54.7	
Opposed	168	45.3	

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	216	60.0	
Terminate the project	144	40.0	

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	226	64.6	
Terminate the Project	124	35.4	

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	169	44.5	
Somewhat Favor	102	26.8	
Somewhat Oppose	52	13.7	
Strongly Oppose	57	15.0	

Churchill County survey respondents show a similar 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	126	32.7	
Somewhat Confident	114	29.6	
Not too confident	62	16.1	
Not confident at all	83	21.6	

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	179	46.6	
Somewhat Confident	100	26.1	
Not too Confident	45	11.7	
Not Confident at All	60	15.6	

Question 7. Age of Respondent (survey respondent)

Table 2-8	Survey Respondents	
Response		
Average Age	56.6 yrs	
Median Age	55 yrs	
60 years or older	149	40.8
25 to 60 years old	203	55.3
Less than 25 years	13	3.6

Question 8. Length of Residency in Churchill County

Table 2-9	Churchill County Survey Respondents	
Response		
Average Length	26.8 yrs	Percent
Median Length	23 yrs	
1-10 years	81	21.9
10-20 years	87	23.6
More than 20 years	201	54.5

Question 9 Sex of Respondent

Table 2-10	Churchill County Survey Respondent	
Response	Frequency	Percent
Male	171	44.4
Female	214	55.6

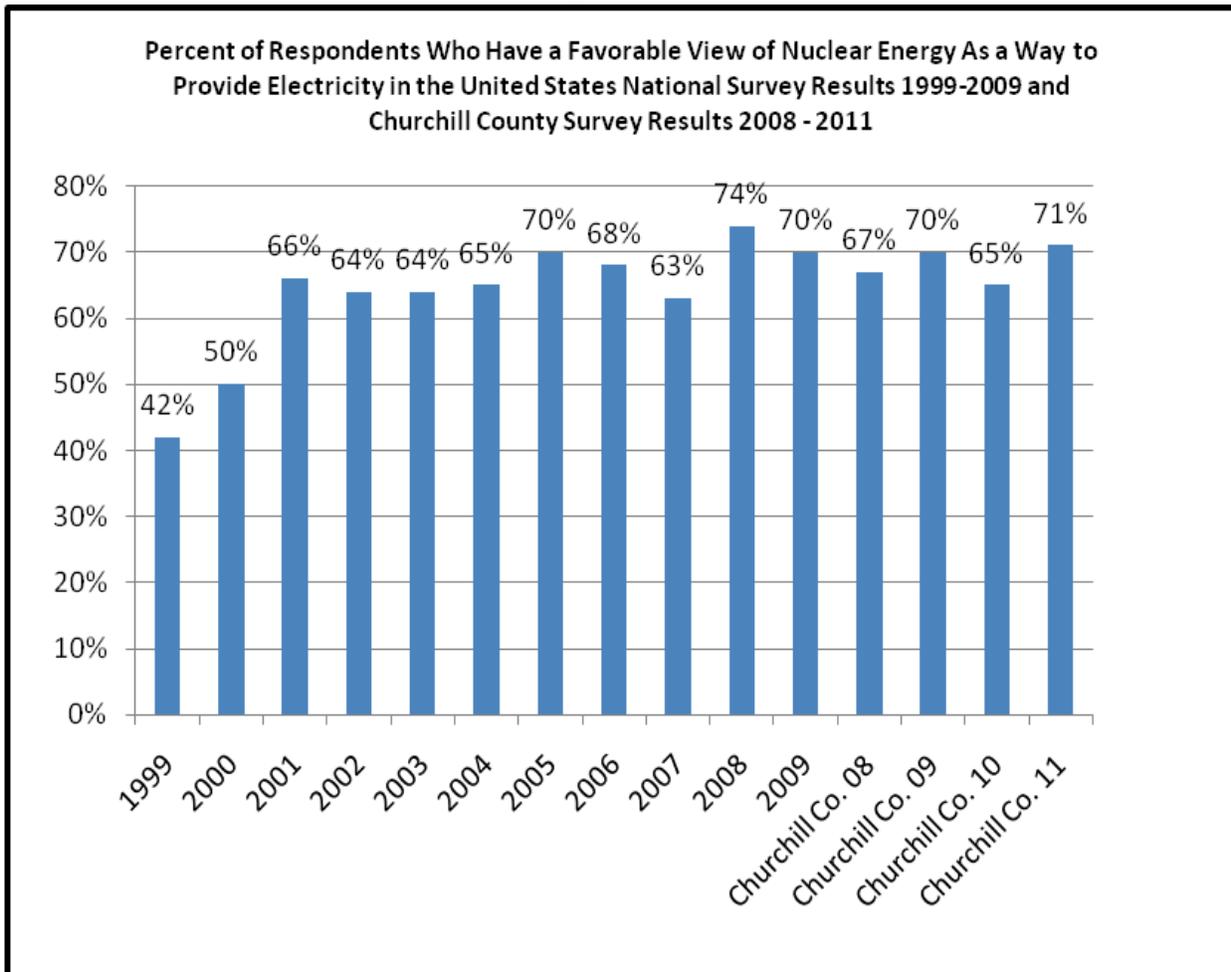
3.0 COMPARISON OF SURVEY RESPONSES

Section 3.0 compares the result of the 2011 Churchill County survey to national survey responses and survey responses from past community survey results. 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 Churchill 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, Churchill County survey respondents have a slightly more 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 Churchill County survey respondents.

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

Table 3-1 Response	2009 Survey Churchill County		2010 Survey Churchill County		2011 Survey Churchill County	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
In Favor	144	44.7	202	51.2	203	54.7
Opposed	178	55.3	192	48.8	168	45.3

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 Churchill County Response	2011 Survey		2010 Survey		2009 Survey		2008 Survey	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Very Confident/ Somewhat Confident	279	72.7	259	65.6	219	66.6	181	54.0
Not Too Confident/ Not Confident at All	105	27.3	136	34.4	110	33.4	155	46.0

In 2011 almost 73 percent of Churchill County survey respondents were very confident or somewhat confident that waste could be transported safely to Yucca Mountain. Survey respondents indicating that they were very confident to somewhat confident increased by almost 20 percent from 2008 to 2011.

Appendix A: Survey

Churchill 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. Churchill 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 Churchill County_____ years.
- 3. Male_____ Female_____