COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS
YUCCA MOUNTAIN PROJECT
CHURCHILL COUNTY, NEVADA

June 2012

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 would 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 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 Churchill County residents with respect to the repository program. In 2008 Churchill County began an effort to track public opinion. Since that time Churchill County has compiled 5 years of survey data and responses from a random sample of registered voters.

As part of its impact assessment and oversight program, Churchill 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.

Churchill County High School students randomly selected 311 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 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 311 Yucca Mountain community survey. Approximately 80 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 is a decline from previous years and possibly shows the effects of limited project activity occurring in the last few years.

Churchill County survey respondents were asked whether they are in favor or opposed to a nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. Approximately 53 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 to continue (Table 2-3). Approximately 63 percent of survey respondents want the license review to continue which is 10 percent higher than those supporting Yucca Mountain. The number of survey respondents supporting the Yucca Mountain licensing review jumps to 68.5 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 wasteful government spending (Table 2-4).

Approximately 68.3 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 slipped slightly from last year. 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 strongly supported or somewhat supported nuclear energy as one of the ways to provide electricity in the United States.

The slight decline in favorable opinion of nuclear power may have been influenced by events which occurred approximately a year ago at Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant in Japan. In Table 2-6 about 24 percent of survey respondents said that events in Japan last year influenced their opinion about nuclear power. However the decline in support for nuclear power among Churchill County respondents was only 3 percent points and in line with historic survey responses (See Table 3-1).

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 80 percent of survey respondents indicated that they were familiar with the project. The declining trend in the number of survey respondents who are familiar with Yucca Mountain is not unexpected as little project activity has occurred in recent years. Additionally, Churchill County experiences a regular turnover of residents due to military activities associated with the Fallon Naval Air Station. 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	247	79.4
No	64	20.6

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	162	52.8
Opposed	145	47.2

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?

Table 2-3	**Survey Respondent**	
Response	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Continue the review	193	62.5
Terminate the project	116	37.5

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?

Table 2-4	**Survey Respondent**	
Response	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Continue the Review	211	68.5
Terminate the Project	97	31.5

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	106	34.3
Somewhat Favor	105	34.0
Somewhat Oppose	52	16.8
Strongly Oppose	46	14.9

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. 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	74	23.7
No	214	68.6
Not Sure	24	7.8

Question 6. Age of Respondent (survey respondent)

Table 2-8	Survey Respondents	
Response		
Average Age of Respondent	57 yrs	
Median Age of Respondent	60 yrs	
60 years or older	144	50.5
25 to 60 years old	136	47.7
Less than 25 years	5	1.8

Question 7. Length of Residency in Churchill County

Table 2-9	Churchill County Survey Respondents	
Response		
Average Length of Residency	27 yrs	Percent
Median Length of Residency	23 yrs	
1-10 years of Residency	53	17.2
10-20 years of Residency	95	30.7
More than 20 years of Residency	161	52.1

Question 8 Sex of Respondent

Table 2-10	Churchill County Survey Respondent	
Response	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Male	142	45.8
Female	168	54.2

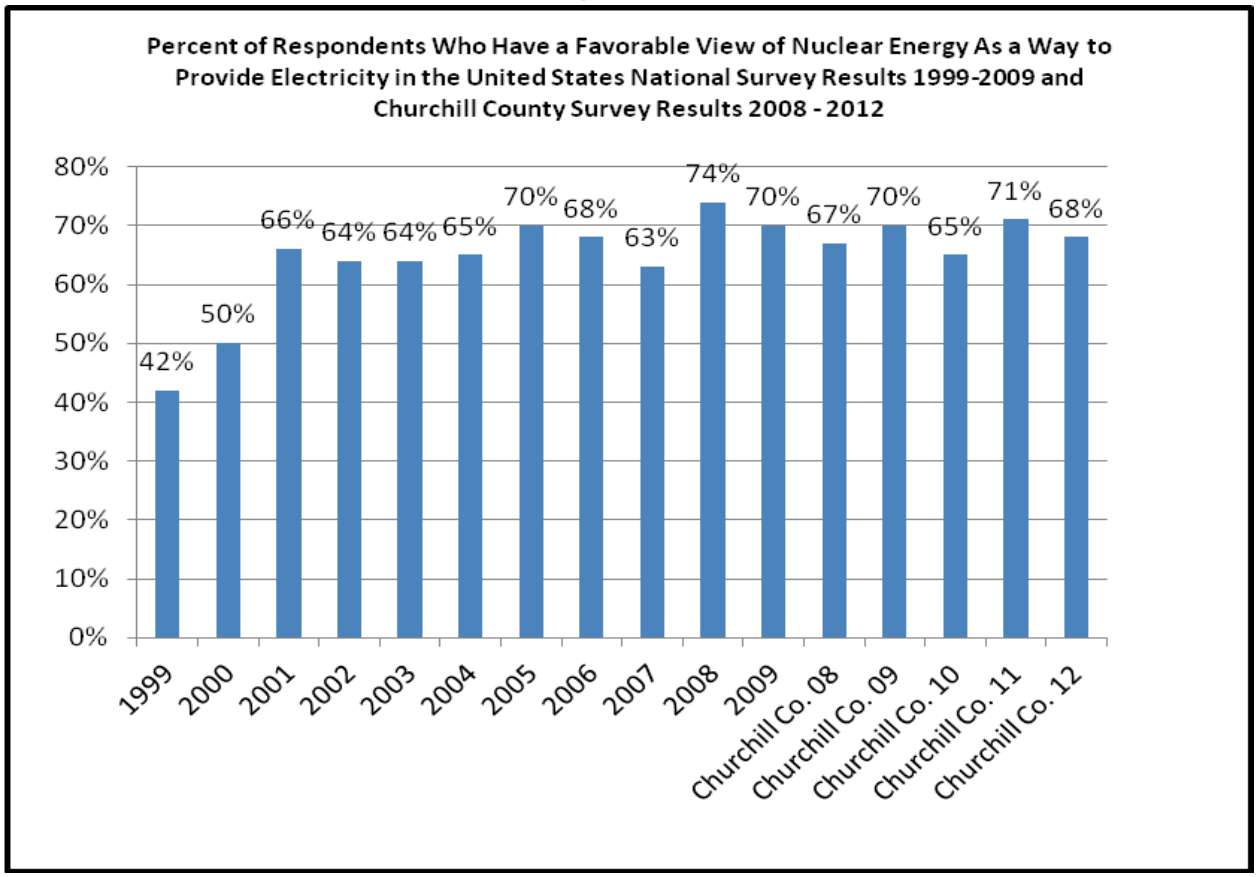
3.0 COMPARISON OF SURVEY RESPONSES

Section 3.0 compares the results of the 2012 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. Events in Fukushima Japan appeared to have little or no influence on Churchill County survey respondents and their support for nuclear power.

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	2009 Survey Churchill Co.		2010 Survey Churchill Co.		2011 Survey Churchill Co.		2012 Survey Churchill Co.	
Response	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**
In Favor	144	44.7%	202	51.2%	203	54.7%	162	52.8%
Opposed	178	55.3%	192	48.8%	168	45.3%	145	47.2%

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	2011 Survey		2010 Survey		2009 Survey		2008 Survey	
Response	**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.

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. Knowing this, should the licensing review of Yucca Mountain continue or terminate?**

Table 3-3	**2011 Survey Churchill Co.**		**2012 Survey Churchill Co.**	
Response	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**
Continue the Review	216	60.0%	193	62.5%
Terminate the Project	144	40.0%	116	37.5%

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 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 Churchill County_____ years.

3. Male_____ Female_____