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DOE Announces Yucca Mountain License Application Schedule
New Director Ward Sproat Testifies on Revised Timeline

WASHINGTON, DC – The Department of Energy (DOE) today announced that it will submit a license application to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) for a nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada, no later than June 30, 2008. The Department also announced that if requested legislative changes are enacted, the repository will be able to accept spent nuclear fuel and high-level waste starting in early 2017. Announcing a schedule for submitting a license application is another step in the Department's mission to provide stability, clarity and predictability in moving the Yucca Mountain Project forward as quickly as possible based on sound science.

"I am confident that we will prepare and submit a defensible and credible license application that accurately reflects a design for the Yucca Mountain repository which meets or exceeds the safety criteria specified by the NRC no later than Monday, June 30, 2008," said Edward "Ward" Sproat, Director of the Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management, in testimony before the House Energy & Commerce Committee's energy & air quality subcommittee.

Sproat announced that independent, external assessments will be conducted on the draft license application, several key engineering processes, and the quality assurance programs at DOE, the primary Yucca Mountain contractor, and several national laboratories. Requests for proposals will be issued within the next few weeks seeking qualified experts to conduct these assessments.

"These reviews will tell us the gaps that currently exist between where the program stands right now and where it needs to be when we submit the application. Safety, quality and schedule discipline are not mutually exclusive; in fact, we will need all three of these elements to meet these licensing expectations," Sproat said.

Sproat emphasized that submitting a license application by June 30, 2008, is his first priority. He said before an application is submitted the following conditions will be met to his satisfaction: design of license meets the licensing requirements; application accurately reflects the design; data which is used to justify the design is accurate and generated in compliance with quality assurance requirements; application adequately addresses all of the requirements of NUREG 1804 (NRC's Yucca Mountain Review Plan); and writers of the application have attested to the accuracy and completeness of their sections.

Submittal of the license application by this date is one of four strategic objectives that Sproat said are "of utmost importance to this program and will be the basis of planning and resource allocation during my tenure." Sproat's four objectives are to:

- Submit a license application to the NRC by June 30, 2008;
- Staff and train the OCRWM organization so that it has the skills and culture needed to design, license, manage construction and operate the Yucca Mountain project with safety, quality and cost effectiveness;
- Address the impasse and growing government liability associated with unmet contractual obligations to move spent fuel from nuclear plant sites;

- Develop and begin implementation of a comprehensive national spent fuel transportation plan that accommodates state, local and tribal concerns to the greatest extent possible.

Sproat, a Registered Professional Engineer, has long and extensive experience in the nuclear power generating industry. He founded McNeill, Sproat & Associates, LLC, a management consulting company specializing in energy technologies. He served as the chief operating officer of Pebble Bed Modular Reactor, Ltd in South Africa, and worked for various nuclear power generating companies including Exelon, PECO Energy and its predecessor, Philadelphia Electric Company.

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