

Excerpt of OCRWM testimony on transportation

**Statement of Dr. Margaret Chu,
Director for Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management
U.S. Department of Energy
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National Transportation and Waste Acceptance Program

To develop a system ready to begin shipping waste in 2010, the program will accelerate efforts that were delayed during the site characterization period as a result of funding constraints. The Administration is requesting \$73.1 million for this work in FY 2004. We plan to begin the initial procurement of the cask fleet and to place orders for long-lead time transportation cask systems and equipment as soon as possible. The contracts will be multi-year, thus requiring full funding before they are awarded. We will focus first on those transportation cask designs that have not been previously developed by industry and will be required for transportation. We will also prepare for the acquisition of transportation and logistics services, determine the approach for performing cask maintenance, develop initial site specific service plans in consultation with the utilities, and develop facility and equipment needs assessments for waste acceptance at DOE's defense waste sites.

Funding in FY 2004 will also support greater interactions with regional, State and local organizations to address institutional and technical transportation operations issues, including development of a final grant process for providing emergency responder assistance under the Nuclear Waste Policy Act to States and tribal governments.

Of the \$73.1 million requested, \$18 million would be for activities associated with developing a waste transportation infrastructure in Nevada. The activities supported in this request are critical to achieving our goal of waste acceptance in 2010. We will continue to assess the transportation options for shipments to the repository. However, the national rail system has been used for the last 25 years to ship radioactive waste safely across the country. No rail link exists between the national rail system and the Yucca Mountain site. If developed, a rail line between the existing rail system and Yucca Mountain would cost an estimated \$300 million to \$1 billion, depending on the corridor and alignment proposed. Along with other transportation systems, the Final EIS for Yucca Mountain examined five potential rail corridors in the state of Nevada that could be used as transportation routes to the repository. If a decision is made to pursue rail transportation and to proceed with an alignment selection within one of the corridors, the Department must analyze the environmental impacts of constructing a rail line within that corridor. We will initiate consultation to solicit input prior to the development of documentation on a specific rail alignment in Nevada.

In FY 2004, pending the outcome of the NEPA process, the Program would initiate the conceptual design process, develop the draft EIS for a rail alignment, and initiate the land acquisition planning.

Also, the program is working closely with the Office of Environmental Management on DOE spent nuclear fuel and high-level waste acceptance criteria to ensure we have an integrated, timely, and cost-effective approach.