



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

**June 2010**

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

**Prepared By:  
Lander County  
Nuclear Waste Project Office  
and Lander County High Schools  
Austin and Battle Mountain**

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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. 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 Lander County residents with respect to the repository program. In 2006 Lander County began an effort to track public opinion.

As part of its impact assessment and oversight program, Lander County initiated a community survey to gauge opinions 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 2010 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. One major difference this year was a direct question asking respondents whether they are in favor or opposed to the Yucca Mountain Project.

### **1.2 Methodology**

Lander County High School students randomly selected 488 local residents 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 interview questions by phone and face to face interviews.

When available the Lander County survey responses for various 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.

### 1.3 Summary of Findings

This section summarizes the responses from the 2010 Yucca Mountain community survey. Lander County High School students completed a total of 488 surveys. Approximately 94 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).

Lander County survey respondents were asked whether they are in favor or opposed to a nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. Approximately 52 percent of survey respondents were in favor of a repository (Table 2-2). Using this response as a base comparison, survey respondents were then told that increasing energy production requires a permanent geologic repository at Yucca Mountain. They were told a repository could also reduce the Nation's energy costs and dependence on foreign energy sources. Knowing this would survey respondents be in favor or opposed to repository. Approximately 63.4 percent of Lander County survey respondents would favor a repository at Yucca Mountain (Table 2-3). Tying Yucca Mountain to energy production influences favorable opinions of the project. Those favoring a repository reached 74 percent if the repository were linked to climate change and economic development. Clearly tying Yucca Mountain to energy production, economic growth and climate change influences opinions (more favorable) of the project (Table 2-4).

Just over 70.0 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 Lander County survey respondents favoring nuclear energy as a means to provide electricity is similar to national survey results (Figure 3-1). In 2009 approximately 70 percent of national survey respondents either strongly supported or somewhat supported nuclear energy as one of the ways to provide electricity.

The vast 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. Just over 59 percent of respondents were very confident or somewhat confident that waste could be transported safely (Table 2-6).

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 69 percent of survey respondent became more confident in the safety of nuclear waste shipments (Table 2-7). Confidence among survey respondents in the safety of waste shipments from over the last two years has remained high.

## 2.0 SURVEY RESULTS

### 2.1 Community 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 94 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?

<b>Table 2-1 Survey Respondent</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	458	93.9
No	30	6.1

Question 1. Are you in favor or opposed to a nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada?

<b>Table 2-2 Survey Respondent</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
In Favor	237	48.6
Opposed	251	51.4

Question 2. Increasing energy production requires a permanent geologic repository at Yucca Mountain. It could also reduce the Nation’s energy costs and dependence on foreign energy sources. Knowing this would you be in favor or opposed to a repository?

<b>Table 2-3 Survey Respondent</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
In Favor	279	57.9
Opposed	203	42.1

Question 3. Would you still oppose a repository, if increasing nuclear energy production would solve climate change and increase economic growth?

<b>Table 2-4 Survey Respondent</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	126	26.1
No	356	73.9

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?

<b>Table 2-5 Survey Respondent</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly Favor	176	36.4
Somewhat Favor	163	33.7
Somewhat Oppose	83	12.1
Strongly Oppose	62	12.8

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. 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?

<b>Table 2-6</b>		<b>Survey Respondent</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	
Very Confident	129	26.4	
Somewhat Confident	161	32.9	
Not too confident	110	22.5	
Not confident at all	88	18.0	

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?

<b>Table 2-7</b>		<b>Survey Respondent</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	
Very Confident	173	35.7	
Somewhat Confident	163	33.6	
Not too Confident	79	16.3	
Not Confident at All	70	14.4	

Question 7 Age of Respondent (survey respondent)

<b>Table 2-8 Survey Respondents</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Average Age	49.4 yrs	
Median Age	50 yrs	
55 year or older	189	39.5
25 to 55 years old	247	51.5
Less than 25 years	43	9.0

Question 8 Length of Residency in Lander County

<b>Table 2-9 Survey Respondents</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Average Length	22.8 yrs	
Median Length	20 yrs	
1-10 years	118	24.5
10-20 years	135	28.0
More than 20 years	229	47.5

Question 9 Sex of Respondent

<b>Table 2-10 Survey Respondent</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Male	244	50.0
Female	244	50.0

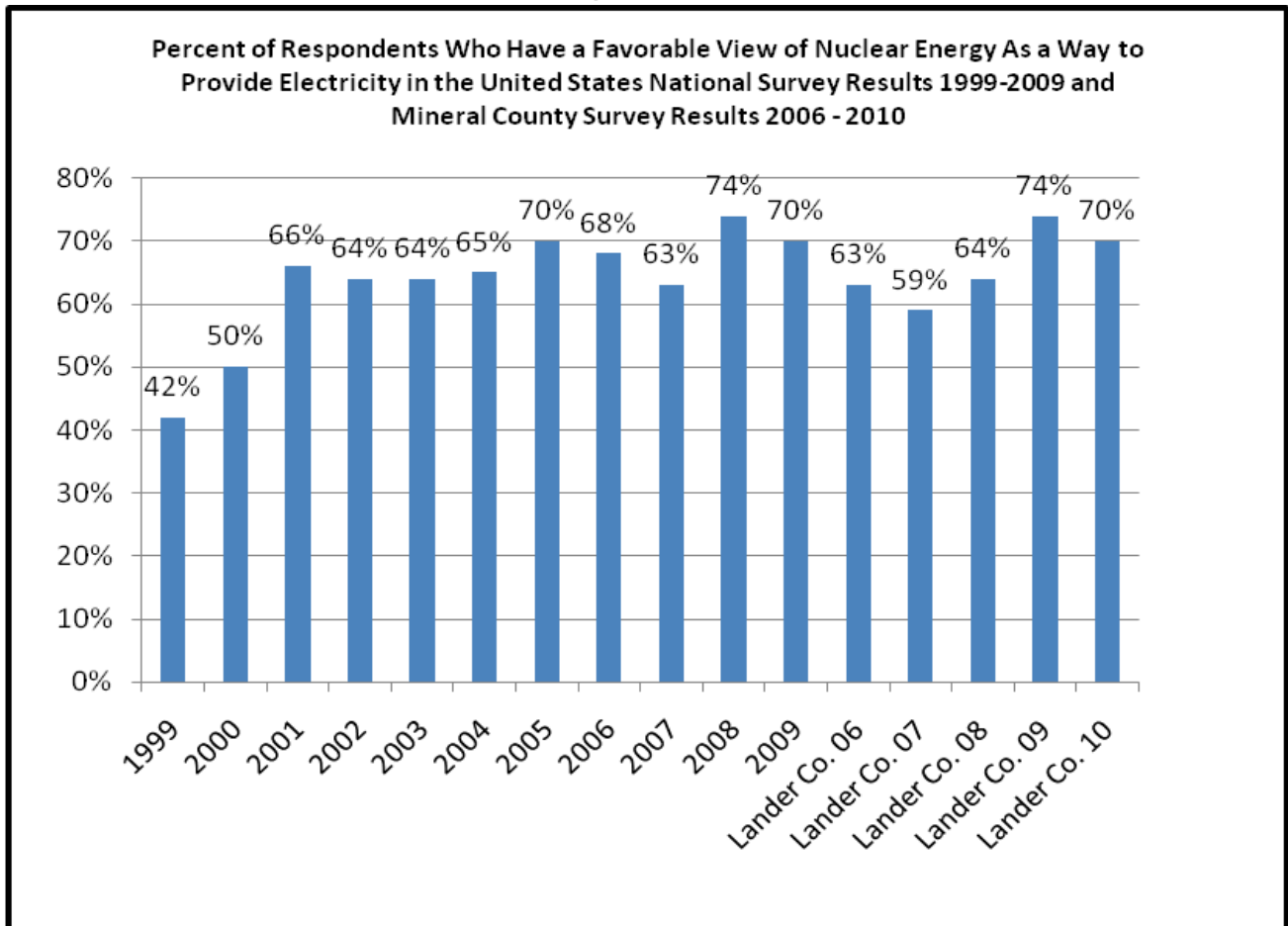
### 3.0 COMPARISON OF SURVEY RESPONSES

Section 3.0 compares the result of the 2010 Lander County survey to national survey responses and responses from other Nevada counties. 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 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	2010 Lander County Survey		2009 Lander County Survey	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
In Favor	237	48.6	235	52.0
Opposed	251	51.4	217	48.0

**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	2010 Lander County Survey		2009 Lander County Survey		2008 Lander County Survey	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Very Confident/Somewhat Confident	336	69.3	219	66.6	298	65.7
Not Too Confident/Not Confident at All	149	30.7	110	33.4	155	34.2

In 2010 almost 70 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 4 percent from 2008 to 2010.

**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 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 \_\_\_\_\_

**If you responded “In Favor” skip to Question 4**

**Question 2**

Increasing nuclear energy production requires a permanent geologic repository at Yucca Mountain. It could also reduce the Nation’s energy costs and dependence on foreign energy sources. Knowing this would you be in favor or opposed to a repository ?

In Favor \_\_\_\_\_

Opposed \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 3:**

Would you still oppose a repository, if increasing nuclear energy production would help solve climate change and increase economic growth?

- 1. Yes \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. No \_\_\_\_\_

**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 Lander County\_\_\_\_\_ years.
- 3. Male\_\_\_\_\_ Female\_\_\_\_\_