



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

**June 2008**

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

**Prepared By:  
Lander County  
Yucca Mountain Oversight Program  
and Austin and Battle Mountain High Schools**

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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 suggest that roughly 70 percent of Nevadans oppose the development of the repository at Yucca Mountain. The State survey results primarily reflect the opinions of Clark County, Nevada due to the population distribution in the State and the survey methodology.

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. To date, there have been no public survey efforts directed primarily at Lander County.

As part of its impact assessment and oversight program of Yucca Mountain, Lander County initiated a series of community surveys using a revised set of questions that are substantially different from previous Yucca Mountain survey efforts. Survey questions were directly related to the Yucca Mountain project and more generally related to nuclear energy, and the transportation of nuclear waste to Yucca Mountain. The 2008 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.

### **1.2 Methodology**

Lander County High School students from Battle Mountain and Austin completed 455 surveys of Lander County residents. The survey efforts covered communities in northern and southern Lander County. Additionally, the Lander County survey included questions on issues that have been the subject of national survey efforts related to Yucca Mountain and nuclear energy. 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.

### **1.3 Summary of Findings**

This section summarizes the responses from the 2008 Yucca Mountain community survey. Lander County High School students completed a total of 455 surveys from Lander County residents. Almost 95 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).

Almost 67 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 2-2). The percent of Lander County survey respondents favoring nuclear energy as a means to provide electricity is higher than national survey results efforts (Figure 3-1). In 2007, national surveys showed that approximately 63 percent of respondents either strongly supported or somewhat supported nuclear energy as one of the ways to provide electricity.

Survey respondents were told that the United States derives about 17 percent of its electric power from nuclear generating facilities whereas France derives 77 percent of its electricity from nuclear facilities. Survey respondents were asked to identify why new nuclear generating facilities have not been planned and built in the United States since 1978. Just over 41 percent said that availability of other resources to produce energy was a reason for no new nuclear power plants, about 60 percent indicated that perceived dangers were a reason, and almost 55 percent indicated that misconceptions and attitudes regarding nuclear facilities was also a reason (Table 2-3). The responses to this question are not entirely unexpected in that they demonstrate emotional responses appear to be strongly correlated to things nuclear.

Nearly 55 percent of Lander County survey respondents either strongly agree or agree that Yucca Mountain is the cornerstone of a comprehensive spent fuel management strategy for this country (Table 2-4). A majority (53 percent) of Lander County survey respondents believe that a delay at Yucca Mountain is a key obstacle to the Nation's energy future (e.g. the development of more nuclear power plants). Finally, approximately 57 percent of survey respondents believe that nuclear energy is crucial for the U.S. economy and environment (Table 2-6). Based upon these survey respondents, nuclear power has a critical role in the nation's future energy needs and delays at Yucca Mountain impede the development of this important resource.

The majority of Lander County survey respondents also believe that radioactive waste can be transported safely to Yucca Mountain. Approximately 57 percent of respondents were very confident or somewhat confident that waste could be transported safely (Table 2-7). 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, a number of survey respondent became more confident in the safety of nuclear waste shipments. A total of 64 percent of the respondents were either somewhat confident or very confident that radioactive waste from America's nuclear power plants will be transported safely to the proposed Yucca Mountain disposal site (Table 2-8).

Almost 7 out of 10 Lander County survey respondents strongly favored or somewhat favored building new nuclear power plants to reduce reliance on oil and coal (Table 2-9).

It is interesting to note, that just over 75 percent of southern Lander County survey respondents favored building new nuclear power plants to reduce reliance on oil and coal. Support for the construction of more nuclear power plants in Lander County is higher than the nation as a whole according to surveys conducted by the Nuclear Energy Institute. In 2007, national survey efforts showed that 63 percent of respondents believed that more nuclear power plants should be built.

## 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. Almost 95 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?

<b>Table 2-1</b>		
<b>Survey Respondent</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	430	94.7
No	24	5.3

Question 1.    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 2-2</b>		
<b>Survey Respondent</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly Favor	121	26.7
Somewhat Favor	167	36.9
Somewhat Oppose	107	23.6
Strongly Oppose	58	12.8

Question 2. The United States derives about 17% of its electric power from nuclear generating facilities. France derives 77% of its electricity from nuclear facilities. Select the reasons below that identify why no new nuclear generating facilities have been planned and built in the U.S. since 1978 (more than one answer allowed).

<b>Table 2-3</b>	<b>Survey Respondents</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Availability of other energy sources	189	41.5
Perceived Dangers	272	59.8
Lack of permanent waste disposal	192	42.2
Misconceptions and attitudes regarding nuclear facilities	248	54.5

Question 3. To what extent do you personally agree or disagree with each of the following statement?

A. Yucca Mountain is the cornerstone of a comprehensive spent fuel management strategy for this country.

<b>Table 2-4</b>	<b>Survey Respondent</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly Agree	67	14.8
Agree	180	39.8
Disagree	134	29.6
Strongly Disagree	71	15.7

B. Delay at Yucca Mountain is a key obstacle to the nation's energy future (e.g. the development of more nuclear power plants).

<b>Table 2-5</b>	<b>Survey Respondent</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly Agree	61	13.9
Agree	170	38.6
Disagree	133	30.2
Strongly Disagree	76	17.3

C. Nuclear energy is crucial for the U.S. economy and environment.

<b>Table 2-6</b>	<b>Survey Respondent</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly Agree	96	22.5
Agree	147	34.5
Disagree	139	32.6
Strongly Disagree	44	10.3

Question 4 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 2-7</b>	<b>Survey Respondent</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Confident	103	22.7
Somewhat Confident	153	33.8
Not too confident	101	22.3
Not confident at all	96	21.2

Question 5 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 2-8</b>	<b>Survey Respondent</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Confident	123	27.1
Somewhat Confident	166	36.6
Not too Confident	98	21.6
Not Confident at All	67	14.8

Question 6 Please tell me if you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose building new nuclear power plants to reduce reliance on oil or coal?

<b>Table 2-9 Survey Respondent</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly Agree	137	30.2
Agree	161	35.5
Disagree	92	20.3
Strongly Disagree	63	13.9

Question 7 Should Nevada receive a benefits package or compensation from the federal government, if the Yucca Mountain Project is built?

<b>Table 2-10 Survey Respondent</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	431	94.9
No	23	5.1

Question 8 Age of Respondent (survey respondent)

<b>Table 2-11 Survey Respondents</b>		
<b>Response</b>		
Average Age	48.2 yrs	
Median Age	47 yrs	
55 year or older	132	29.9
25 to 55 years old	267	60.5
Less than 25 years	42	9.5

Question 9 Household Size

<b>Table 2-12</b>		<b>Survey Respondent</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	
1 person	72	12.1	
2 person	164	39.4	
3 person	53	19.4	
4 person	89	15.4	
More than 4 persons	73	13.6	

Question 10 Length of Residency in Lander County

<b>Table 2-13</b>		<b>Lander County Survey Respondents</b>	
<b>Response</b>			
Average Length	21.25 yrs		
Median Length	16 yrs		
1-10 years	112	29.9	
10-20 years	140	60.5	
More than 20 years	204	9.5	

Question 11 Sex of Respondent

<b>Table 2-14</b>		<b>Lander County Survey Respondent</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	
Male	182	40.4	
Female	269	59.6	

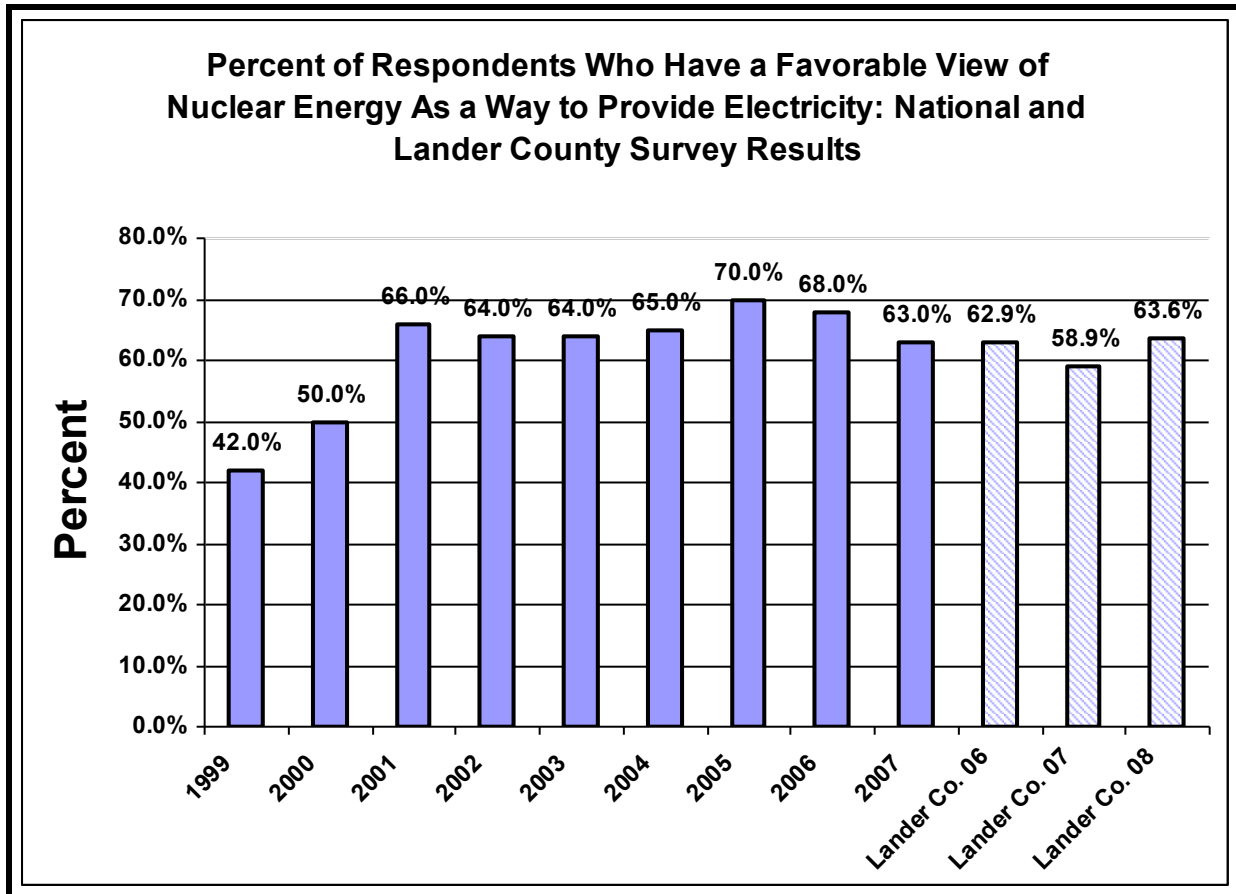
### 3.0 COMPARISON TO NATIONAL SURVEY RESPONSES

Section 3.0 compares the result of the 2008 Lander County survey to national survey responses and responses from previous survey efforts. The Nuclear Energy Institute conducted a number of survey efforts related to Yucca Mountain and nuclear energy use over the last several years. Figure 3-1 helps gauge the support for nuclear power in Lander County and across the nation.

#### 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**



Source: NEI, 1998-2005, Lander County, 2008

As compared to national survey results, Lander 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.

**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?

<b>Table 3-1</b>	<b>2008 Lander County Survey</b>		<b>2007 Lander County Survey</b>		<b>2006 Lander County Survey</b>	
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Response</b>						
Very Confident	137	30.2	88	21.5	80	22.7
Somewhat Confident	161	35.5	166	40.5	137	38.8
Not Too Confident	92	20.3	88	21.5	84	23.8
Not confident at all	63	13.9	68	16.6	52	14.7

In 2008 nearly two-thirds of Lander County survey respondents were very confident and somewhat confident that waste could be transported safely to Yucca Mountain. There appears to be an increasing confidence to ship nuclear waste.

## 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.

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:

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 2:

The United States derives about 17% of its electric power from nuclear generating facilities. France derives 77% of its electricity from nuclear facilities. Select the reasons below that identify why no new nuclear generating facilities have been planned and built in the U.S. since 1978 (more than one answer allowed).

1. Availability of other energy sources (coal, oil, hydroelectric, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_
2. Perceived dangers \_\_\_\_\_
3. Lack of permanent waste disposal \_\_\_\_\_

4. Misconceptions and attitudes regarding nuclear facilities. \_\_\_\_\_

3. To what extent do you personally agree or disagree with each of the following statements?  
Please select one answer from each statement below.

	1. Strongly Agree	2. Agree	3. Disagree	4. Strongly Disagree
A. Yucca Mountain is the cornerstone of a comprehensive spent fuel management strategy for this country	_____	_____	_____	_____
B. Delay at Yucca Mountain is a key obstacle to the nation's energy future (e.g. the development of more nuclear power plants)	_____	_____	_____	_____
C. Nuclear energy is crucial for the U.S. economy and environment.	_____	_____	_____	_____

**Question 4:**

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 5:**

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 \_\_\_\_\_

Question 6:

Please tell me if you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose building new nuclear power plants to reduce reliance on oil and coal?

- 1. Strongly favor \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Somewhat favor \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Somewhat oppose \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Strongly oppose \_\_\_\_\_

Question 7:

Should Nevada receive a benefits package or compensation from the federal government, if the Yucca Mountain Project is built?

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

**I. Demographic Questions-Survey Respondents**

1. Age of Respondent (Survey respondent)\_\_\_\_\_Years
2. Total number of persons living in your household\_\_\_\_\_.
3. Length of residency in Lander County\_\_\_\_\_ years.
4. Male\_\_\_\_\_ Female\_\_\_\_\_