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YUCCA MOUNTAIN

DOE urges Trump team to ditch repository

Hannah Northey, E&E News reporter
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The Obama administration in a document obtained by E&E News acknowledges a number of lawmakers are eager to revive the stalled Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository in Nevada while reaffirming its rejection of the project. Photo by Hannah Northey.

The Obama administration is defending its rejection of the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste site in Nevada to President-elect Donald Trump's transition team, documents obtained by E&E News show.

In their [brief](#) to Trump's team, current Department of Energy leaders said Congress has supported the administration's position that the site is "unworkable" since 2011 by not approving any new funding for the repository.

DOE officials went on to acknowledge that many lawmakers are eager to see Nuclear Regulatory Commission licensing of the repository continue, but questioned whether that would happen.

"There are members of Congress who believe the Yucca Mountain NRC repository licensing process should be resumed and, at a minimum, completed to demonstrate that a disposal facility could successfully demonstrate its safety and obtain an authorization from NRC to being construction (even if it is never constructed)," they wrote.

A source close to the transition effort said Trump's team received the document this week. While the president-elect has not opined on Yucca Mountain, Republicans have for years expressed interest in reviving the stalled Nevada project.

Many Silver State residents and politicians despise Yucca. But their power will wane, given that Senate

Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) is leaving Congress.

Republicans and Democrats alike have said there could be a more open debate about nuclear waste next year with Reid's departure.

Former Rep. Norm Dicks (D-Wash.) said in September that lawmakers would "revisit" nuclear waste issues, especially on spending matters. Dicks is a former senior appropriator who co-chairs the Bipartisan Policy Center's Nuclear Waste Council.

Other members of the Nevada congressional delegation have predicted a renewed push for Yucca after Reid leaves office.

Sen. Dean Heller (R-Nev.), who also opposes the project, said this summer that Reid's departure would create a window of opportunity for Yucca Mountain in the eyes of those who want it to go forward ([Greenwire](#), Aug. 19).

While rejecting the project, DOE has been busy collecting comments from across the nation on how to craft and implement a consent-based process for disposing of nuclear waste.

The agency has held meetings in Arizona, Massachusetts, Colorado, California, Georgia, Illinois, Idaho and Minnesota, and is slated to release a report by the month's end ([Greenwire](#), Aug. 2).

The ultimate plan is to transport, store and dispose of hazardous spent fuel and high-level radioactive commercial and defense waste at temporary and permanent sites. DOE said it will use public comments to engage with potential host communities.

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