

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

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**July 2005**

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

**Prepared By:  
Mineral County  
Office of Nuclear Projects**

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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 strongly opposed by the State of Nevada. Surveys conducted by the State indicate that roughly 70 percent of Nevadans oppose the development of the repository at Yucca Mountain. The State survey results strongly reflect the opinions of Clark County, Nevada due to the population distribution in the State and the survey methodology. For example, in the 1991 State telephone survey only 19 of the 504 respondents were from affected units of local government (AULGs) other than Clark County. It is possible that none of the respondents in the 2002 State survey lived in Mineral County.

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 Mineral County residents with respect to the repository program. To date, Mineral County has completed a public opinion survey that provides vastly different survey responses as compared to state survey efforts. As part of the impact assessment and oversight program, the Mineral County Board of Commissioners initiated a series of public surveys targeted at high school students, business owners, and residents in Mineral County. Survey questions were directly related to the Yucca Mountain project and associated transportation elements of the repository. This year Mineral County prepared a follow-up survey to the community wide survey completed in 2003.

### **1.2 Methodology**

Approximately 155 face- to-face surveys were conducted in the Hawthorne area as a follow-up to the 2003 resident's survey in order to ascertain views and knowledge of the repository program from Mineral County residents. The 2005 survey questions duplicated many of those used by the State of Nevada and used by the 2003 Mineral County survey. Using similar questions allows for comparability with other survey results concerning the Yucca Mountain project. A summary of comparative findings can be found in Section 3.0 of this report.

Mineral County High School students were responsible for the administration of the survey instrument and compilation of data. Each student was assigned a specific number surveys to complete based upon assigned households in the community. Survey responses were entered into a database in order to generate final results. Additionally, Mineral County High School students provided a final report presentation to the Mineral County Board of County Commissioners.

### **1.3 Summary of Findings**

This section summarizes the views of Mineral County residents based upon 2005 survey results. When asked whether Mineral County survey respondents would vote for

or against a repository at Yucca Mountain, the majority, 43.2 percent said they would oppose the repository (See Table 2-1). A large number of respondents (18.1%) indicated that they did not know whether they would vote for or against the repository. Considering only those respondents who directly answered the question with a vote “for” or “against” the repository, approximately 55.8 percent indicated they would vote against the repository, which is lower than the percentage (63.1%) who indicated that they would vote against the repository in 2003.

Throughout the survey, there is a significant number and percentage of “don’t know” responses. Both the number and percentage of “don’t know” response were higher in 2005 as compared to 2003. Such results may indicate a change in views toward the repository program. For example, both question 3 and 4 (Tables 2-3 and Table 2-4) have a large number of “don’t know” responses, 18.7% and 16.5% respectively. Eliminating the “Don’t Know” responses shows that 42.7 percent of the respondents felt that nuclear waste could be transported in an acceptably safe manner where as rail shipments were viewed as acceptably safe by 61.3 percent of the respondent.

In Table 2-5 Mineral County survey respondents were asked their views on transportation after reading a brief history of waste shipment performance. Just over 65 percent of respondents indicated that they were very confident or somewhat confident that waste could be transported from reactor sites to a repository (See Table 2-5).

Finally, a majority of Mineral County survey respondents felt that the State could negotiate for benefits while it challenges the repository program. Eliminating the number of “don’t know” responses, shows that 76.6 percent of respondents thought it was possible for the State to continue challenging the repository while developing a benefits package for Nevada. This finding is consistent with early survey efforts.

## 2.0 SURVEY RESULTS

### 2.1 2005 Resident Survey Results

This section contains the 2005 survey results for Mineral County. A complete survey can be found in Appendix A. Survey respondents were first asked whether or not they were familiar with the Yucca Mountain Project. Nearly 90 percent of respondents indicated that they were familiar with the project. Frequency tabulations are shown for each survey question beginning with question 1.

Question 1 Suppose the Department of Energy selected the Yucca Mountain site for the nation's first high-level radioactive waste repository, but it would not be located there unless you voted in favor of it. If this were the case would you vote for it or against it?

<b>Table 2-1</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>Percent</b>
For	53	34.2
Against	67	43.2
Wouldn't Vote	2	1.3
No Answer	28	18.1
Don't Know	5	3.2

There are a large number of "no answer" responses to question 1 which may indicate respondent's uncertainty over the project.

Question 2. You have said you would vote "against" the Yucca Mountain Project. Would you say you are somewhat oppose or strongly oppose the repository?

<b>Table 2-2</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Somewhat Opposed	34	42.9
Strongly Opposed	30	48.6
Refused	1	1.4
Don't Know	2	2.9
No Answer	3	4.3

Question 3. Do you think nuclear waste could be transported by truck in a way that would be acceptably safe?

<b>Table 2-3</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	53	34.2
No	71	45.8
Refused	0	0.0
Don't Know	29	18.7
No Answer	2	1.3

Question 4. Do you think nuclear waste could be transported by rail in a way that would be acceptably safe?

<b>Table 2-4</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	72	46.5
No	46	29.7
Refused	1	2.5
Don't Know	34	16.5
No Answer	2	4.4

Both questions 3 and 4 concerning transportation show a high number of “don’t know” responses to transportation safety questions. Also, there appears to be a difference between truck and rail shipment safety in Mineral County. A majority of those answering yes or no to question 4 (61 percent) thought waste could be transported by rail in an acceptably safe manner. Only 42.7 percent were confident of truck shipments.

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 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 2-5</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Confident	44	28.4
Somewhat Confident	58	37.4
Not Too Confident	34	21.9
Not confident at all	19	12.3

Question 6 Do you think it is possible for the state, tribal and local governments to continue challenging the Yucca Mountain Project while developing a benefits package for Nevada?

<b>Table 2-6</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	69	43.95
No	21	13.38
Refused	7	4.46
Don't Know	50	31.85
No Answer	10	6.37

Question 9 Age of Respondents

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
18-25 years old	33	22.00
25-45	54	36.00
45-65	55	36.76
65+	8	5.33

Question 10 Length of Residence

The average length of residence for survey respondents was 22.2 years. About 45 percent of the respondents lived in Mineral County for more than 20 years.

### 3.0 COMPARISON OF SURVEY RESULTS

Section 3.0 compares the results from the 2005 Mineral County survey against the results of the State of Nevada survey conducted in the Summer of 2002, and the 2005 Mineral County survey (Table 3-1). The Mineral County survey utilized several questions from the State’s survey for comparison purposes. Figure 3-1 shows the direct comparison between the 2003 and 2005 Mineral County surveys.

Question: Suppose the Department of Energy selected the Yucca Mountain site for the nation’s first high-level radioactive waste repository, but it would not be located there unless state residents voted in favor of it. If this were the case would you vote for it or against it?

<b>Table 3-1</b>	<b>Mineral County Business Survey 2004</b>	<b>Mineral County Community Survey 2005</b>	<b>Mineral County Community Survey 2003</b>	<b>State Survey 2002</b>
<b>Response</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Percent</b>
For	42.4	34.2	29.8	20.30
Against	45.6	43.2	63.1	76.24
Refused	0.0	1.3	0.4	
No Answer	10.17	18.2	6.4	3.22
Don't Know	3.39	3.2	0.4	0.25

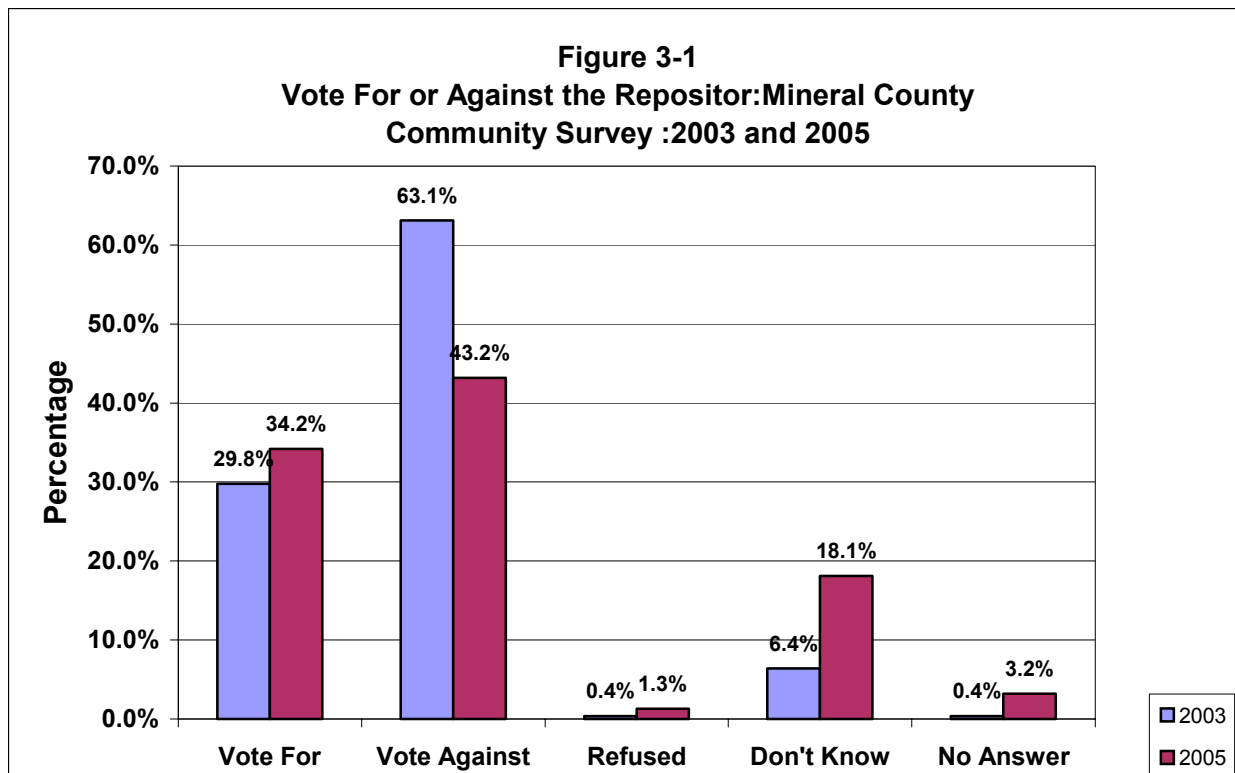


Figure 3-2 and Figure 3-3 compares survey responses associated with truck and rail shipments through Mineral County. Both Figures show a sizeable increase in “Don’t Know” responses. It appears that rail remains the most acceptably safe alternative for waste shipments to a repository.

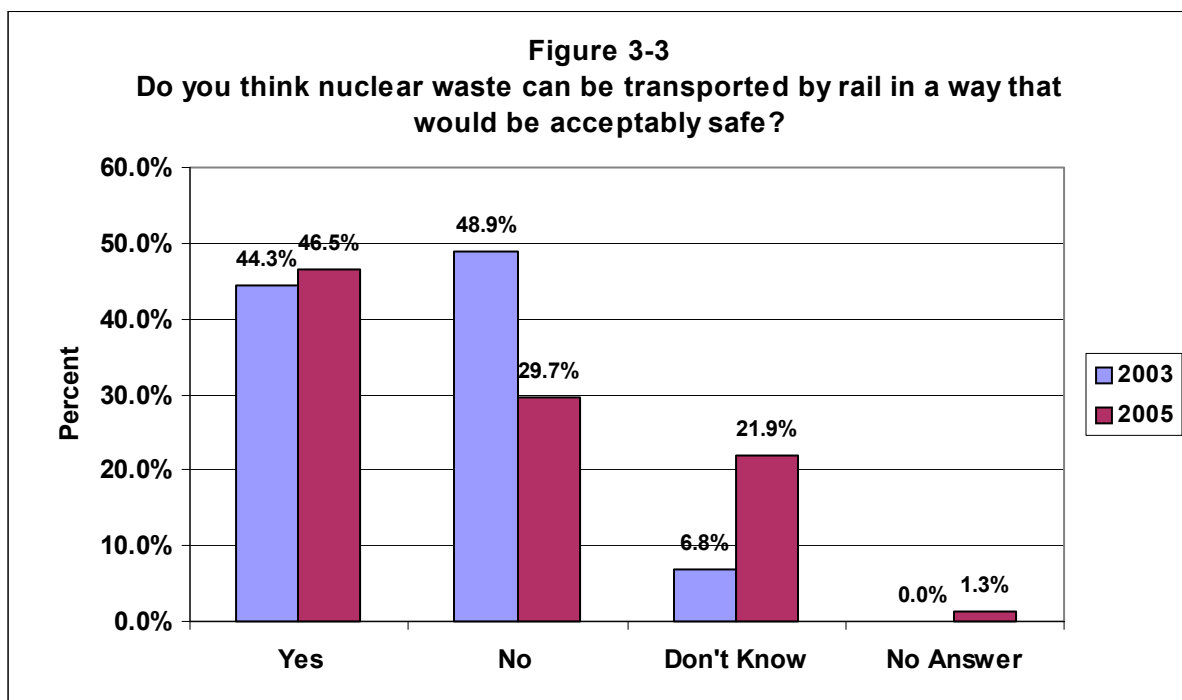
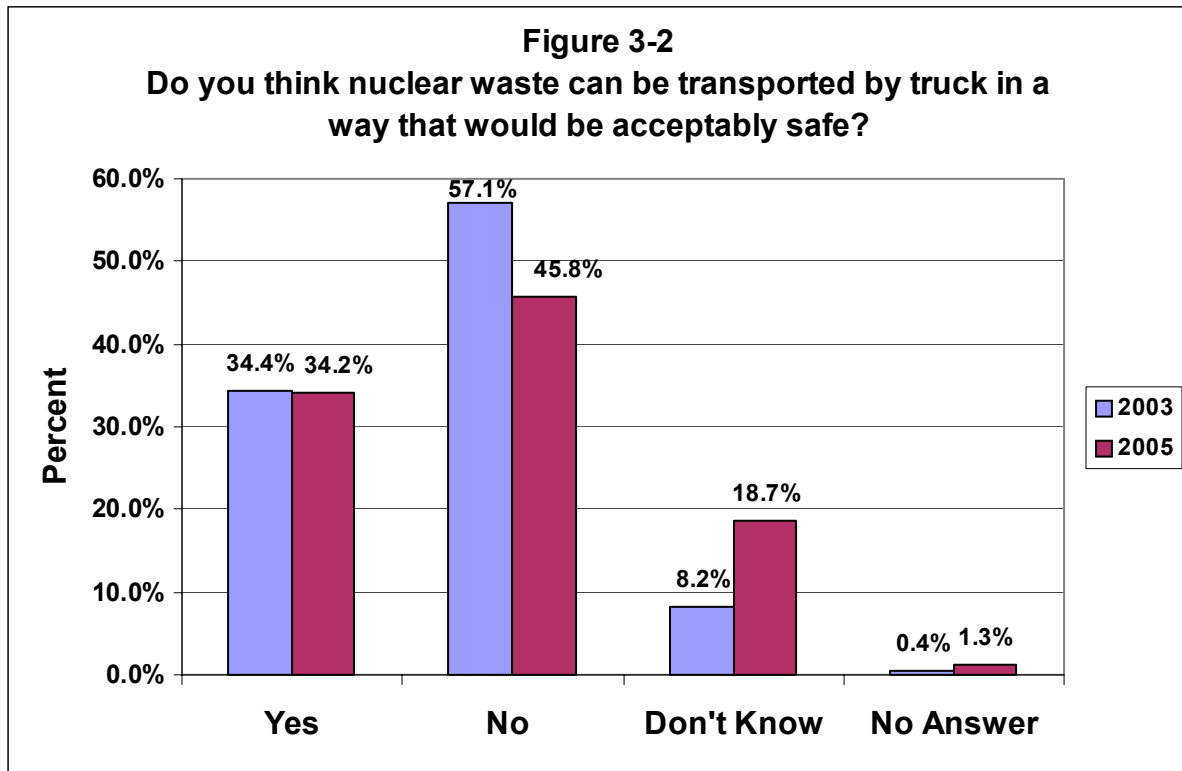


Figure 3-4 shows a comparison of survey responses related to the questions of benefits for the State of Nevada. Again, a large number of “don’t know” responses occurred to this question as compared to 2003.

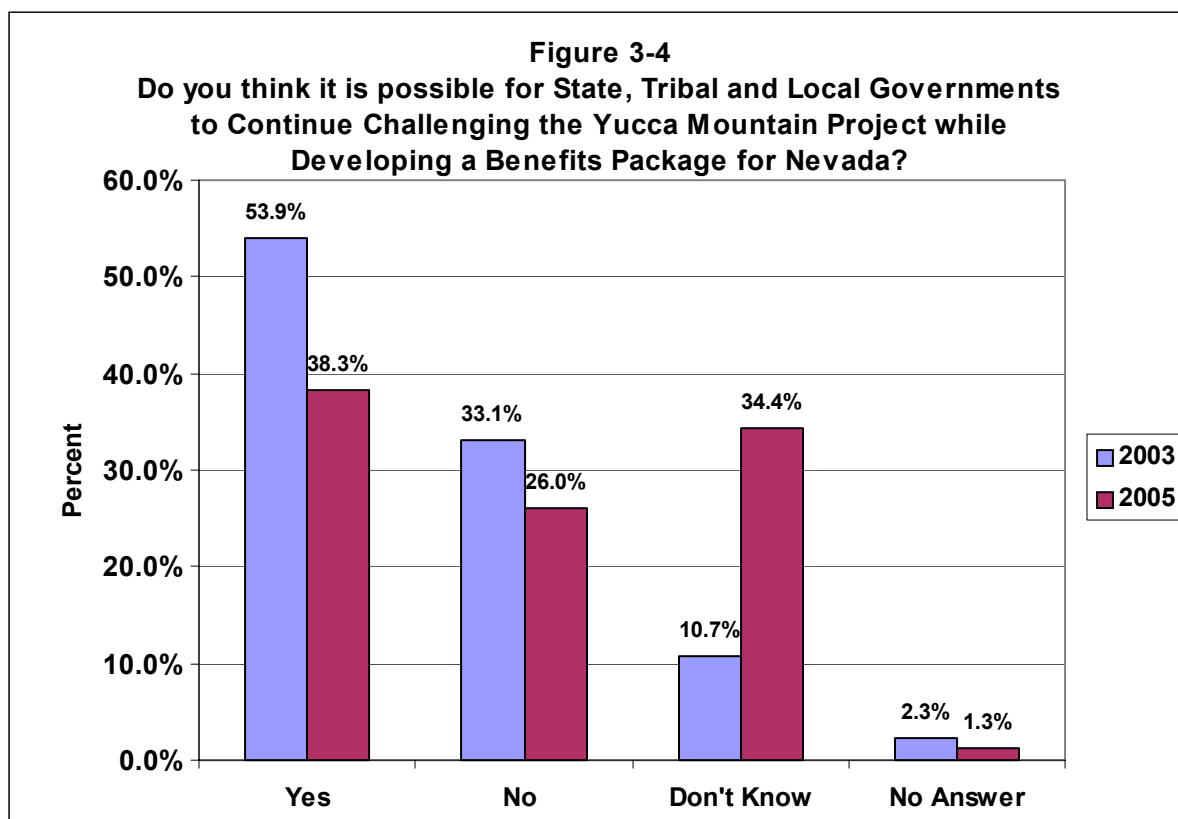


Table 3-2 shows the results of various survey responses to questions concerning whether or not waste can be transported in an acceptably safe manner.

<b>Table 3-2: Can nuclear waste be transported in a manner that is acceptably safe?</b>						
Response	Amargosa Valley	Beatty	Pahrump	Indian Springs	City of Caliente	Churchill Co.
Yes	86.0%	87.5%	63.3%	73.9%	54.4%	25.2%
No	14.0	12.5	36.7	26.1	45.6	56.4
Don't Know	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	17.6

A solid majority of survey respondents from communities directly surrounding the Yucca Mountain site thought waste could be transported in a manner that is acceptably safe. In comparison Mineral County respondents were asked the same question but in two

parts focusing on trucks and rail shipments. Approximately 66.5 percent of Mineral County respondents (Table 2-6) were very confident or somewhat confident that waste could be transported in a acceptable safe manner.

## **Appendix A: Community Survey**

Mineral County is conducting this survey as part of its oversight responsibilities of the Yucca Mountain project. Funding for the survey is provided by a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy. Mineral County High School students have volunteered to conduct this survey.

Are you familiar with the Yucca Mountain Project and the federal government's efforts to store high-level nuclear waste in Nevada?

Yes\_\_\_\_\_

No\_\_\_\_\_

Survey #\_\_\_\_\_

Question 1:

The federal Department of Energy (DOE) wants to build the nation's first high-level radioactive waste repository at Yucca Mountain in southern Nevada. If given the opportunity to vote on this matter, would you vote for or against locating a nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain?

- 1 Vote For
- 2 Vote Against
- 7 REFUSED
- 8 DON'T KNOW
- 9 NO ANSWER

If you would vote for the repository skip to question 3, otherwise answer question 2.

Question 2:

You have said that you would vote "against" the Yucca Mountain repository project. Are you somewhat opposed or strongly opposed to the repository?

- 1 somewhat oppose
- 2 strongly opposed
- 7 REFUSED
- 8 DON'T KNOW
- 9 NO ANSWER

Question 3:

Do you think nuclear waste can be transported by truck in a way that would be acceptably safe?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 7 Refused
- 8 Don't Know
- 9 No Answer

Question 4:

Do you think nuclear waste could be transported by rail in a way that would be acceptably safe?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 7 Refused
- 8 Don't Know
- 9 No Answer

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?

- very confident\_\_\_\_\_
- somewhat confident\_\_\_\_\_
- no too confident\_\_\_\_\_
- or not confident at all\_\_\_\_\_

Question 6:

Do you think it is possible for the state, tribal and local governments to continue challenging the Yucca Mountain Project while developing a benefits package for Nevada?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 7 REFUSED
- 8 DON'T KNOW
- 9 NO ANSWER

## **I. Demographic Questions**

7. Age of Respondent (Survey respondent)\_\_\_\_\_Years

8. How Long have you lived in Nevada?\_\_\_\_\_Years

9. Total number of persons living in your household\_\_\_\_\_.

10. Age of respondent\_\_\_\_\_