WM2009 Conference Panel Report

Panel Session 09 Yucca Mountain: Project at the Crossroads

Panel Reporter – Robert Edmonds, AREVA Federal Services

The Yucca Mountain panel was organized after DOE-OCRWM was forced to withdraw due to budget limitations resulting from Congressional reductions in the OCRWM operating budget for YFY09.

Panelists included:

- Chair: Lake Barrett, former acting Director of the US DOE Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management
- Co-chair: Ed Davis, President of Pegasus Associates, former President of NAC International
- Panelist: Michael Voegele, former Senior Scientist, Yucca Mountain Project, currently consultant to Nye County, Nevada
- Panelist: David Blee, Executive Director, US Transport Council

Lake Barrett, former acting Director of OCRWM opened the session with a sobering assessment of the current political environment in which the Yucca Mountain Project finds itself. Project funding is at an all time low, threatening the viability of the project. Mr. Barrett described the implications of removing Yucca Mountain as an alternative to solving the nation's High Level Radioactive Waste challenge.

Ed Davis, former President of NAC, presented a history of Legislation related to Nuclear Waste Disposal from Eisenhower to Obama.

Michael Voegele, former Senior Scientist, Yucca Mountain Project, reminded us why Science is important for the Yucca Mountain Project and for any of the potential alternatives to Yucca Mountain. He described the depth of scientific assessment of the Yucca Mountain Project and the implications of this work for the NRC license.

David Blee, Executive Director of U.S. Transport Council, challenged the audience to think abut the implications of removing Yucca Mountain as the nation's High Level Waste repository despite an overwhelming Congressional approval of the site in 2002.

Following the presentations Mr. Barrett led a spirited discussion with impressive audience participation, including comments from the French repository authority, ANDRA, and UK's NDA extolling the US to continue its licensing of the project.