



# Nevada Desert Experience

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*Organizing Interfaith Resistance  
to Nuclear Weapons and War*

June 12, 2013

Dear Governor Sandoval:

This letter expresses our grave opposition to the planned shipment of U233 radioactive waste from Oak Ridge, Tennessee, across the United States for burial in shallow trenches at Area 5 of the Nevada National Security Site (NNSS).

We are three citizens already hurt by nuclear programs in Nevada, and we speak for the Nevada Desert Experience National Council. One of us is a Western Shoshone man; one is a downwinder who was exposed to fallout in the 1950's in St. George, Utah; and one was a child in Las Vegas in the 50's and taken close to ground zero to witness (and be exposed to) above ground nuclear explosions that were publicly stated as "safe."

The U233 waste was made in a New York reactor in the 1960s experimenting with Thorium as a fuel for nuclear reactors. Its unique method of generation and radioactive profile mean that it is legally classified as "low level waste (LLW)," despite the high levels of dangerous gamma rays and other radiation it will continue to emit for a long time, and despite its potential use in dirty bombs and rudimentary nuclear weapons if stolen.

As they did in the 50's, both government and industry representatives try to allay public fears. They tout their safety record trucking nuclear materials around the country, but that doesn't lessen the chance of a future tragedy. Because the consequence of even one accident could be irreparably catastrophic, their promises are not reassuring. Adding inhibitors to reduce the chance of accidental chain reactions is good. Changing waste into a solid, less volatile form is good. Nonetheless, the casks of waste still require remote controlled cranes to be moved, and can hardly be considered "safe" or "low level" in an honest sense.

All this adds to our skepticism that this material will be handled safely or securely. Why not develop Hardened On-Site Storage (HOSS) as a way to reduce the transportation of highly radioactive material. Residents and environmentalists near Nevada and other remote waste dumps like New Mexico's Waste Isolation Pilot Project (WIPP) don't want more varieties of waste to be diverted to their sites either.

We must draw a line in the desert! Nevada is not a wasteland! This plan seems like sidestepping of the fact that the plans for Yucca Mountain have been all but scuttled. As members of communities who have suffered from radioactive contamination, we say, "No!" to more radioactive dumping in Nevada, and we stand in solidarity with the Western Shoshone nation whose historic lands include the NNSS. We say, "No, to the U233!"

Hoping for your serious consideration,

**Johnnie Bobb Janet Chisholm Claudia Peterson**

**Johnnie L. Bobb** Austin, NV  
Spiritual person and Chief of the Western Shoshone National Council. For 13 years he has led the Western Shoshone Walk/Run, which he originated, to give prayerful witness that the Nuclear Test Site and Yucca Mountain are on Ruby Valley Treaty land.

**Janet Chisholm** Albany, CA  
Las Vegas native, peace activist & founder of national nonviolence training program. Past Chair Episcopal Peace Fellowship & past Executive Director of Fellowship of Reconciliation. Retired from social services, college teaching and Christian Education.

**Claudia Peterson** St. George, UT  
Downwinder of nuclear testing having been born and raised in Cedar City, UT. Lost many family members and friends to cancer and illness caused by the testing. Involved in the work for removal of anything nuclear since 1987.

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