

Las Vegas Sun

Posted at: <https://lasvegassun.com/news/2017/jun/04/from-sea-to-glowing-sea-yucca-mountain-a-threat-to/>

SUN EDITORIAL:

From sea to glowing sea: Yucca Mountain a threat to 44 states

Sunday, June 4, 2017 | 2 a.m.

Some people richly deserve to be called NIMBYs – Not In My Backyarders, or jerks who oppose practically anything being built near their home regardless of how much it will benefit their community.

A bicycle path and walking trail? Reroute it. A soccer complex? Make those noisy kids play somewhere else. A shelter for victims of domestic violence? Take it down the road.

But objecting to Yucca Mountain doesn't make anybody in Nevada a NIMBY, as evidenced by the map published on this page.

Proponents of the project have tried to characterize the state's objectors as being self-interested and unconcerned about the health and welfare of others, but the fact is that Yucca affects Americans coast-to-coast – not just Southern Nevadans.

As Sen. Dean Heller noted in an excellent presentation to his colleagues recently on the Senate floor, the map shows truck and train routes that would be used to ship 70,000 metric tons of waste to the high-level nuclear dump should the project be resurrected. Those routes would go through counties that are home to about 175 million Americans.

More pointedly, 10 million to 12 million of those Americans reside within what's known as the radiological region of influence, an area within a half mile of the train track or roadway in which radiation can be detected during routine shipments. And that's a best-case scenario. In the worst case – like a terrorist attack or a major accident – the area becomes a kill zone.

And it runs right along Interstate 15 near the Las Vegas Strip, to name just one of the places where it would put Americans at extreme risk.

“What this means is that under the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, we're looking at shipping 9,495 rail casks in 2,800 trains, and 2,650 trucks hauling one case each to Yucca Mountain over 50 years,” Heller said during his presentation. “If the capacity limit at Yucca is more than doubled as has been discussed, DOE would ship about

21,909 rail casks in about 6,700 trains 5,025 truck casks to Yucca Mountain. I ask my colleagues, do you really believe that over the span of 50 years that there won't be one single transportation accident with an ensuing radiological release?"

Elsewhere in his presentation, Heller noted:

- The routes would go through 330 congressional districts.
- Waste would be transported over 22,000 miles of railways and 7,000 miles of highways.
- The rails and roads pass through 44 states and the tribal lands of at least 30 Native American tribes.

Not in our backyard? How about not in everybody's backyard?

The information presented by Heller wasn't anything new – it had been compiled by the Nevada Commission on Nuclear Projects – but it deserves to be repeated loudly, often and to leaders of every state that would be affected.

That's especially the case now that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has restarted the site's licensing process by making a request for comments. The process was halted in 2010 when the Department of Energy declared the site was no longer an appropriate option.

The NRC's move is a costly mistake. The Government Accountability Office issued a report recently saying it would cost \$330 million and take up to five years to complete the licensing process. Meanwhile, the project is still fundamentally flawed due to concerns over seismic activity at the site and the possibility of radiation entering both the atmosphere and the groundwater.

Keep in mind that the waste is so toxic that 10 years after being removed from a reactor, it would emit a lethal dose of radiation to someone standing near it unshielded within 70 seconds. The routes would take it through the heart of Las Vegas, threatening to devastate not only the city's economy but the entire state's should there be an accident.

So no, we don't want the stuff in our backyard. But we also don't want it going through millions of our fellow Americans' backyards, either, on its way toward a facility that is nowhere near proven to be a safe repository.

Yucca Mountain is a nationwide catastrophe in the making. There's no NIMBY about it.

Maps:

- [Cities Potentially Affected by Shipments to Yucca Mountain](#) (pdf-2.45M)
- [States Potentially Affected by Shipments to Yucca Mountain with Congressional Districts](#) (pdf-7.05M)
- [Congressional Districts Potentially Affected by Shipments to Yucca Mountain - 115th Congress](#) (pdf-882K)

