

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY**

**SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL
AREAS 9 AND 23, NEVADA TEST SITE**

AGENCY: U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)

ACTION: Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

SUMMARY: New solid waste regulations require that the existing Nevada Test Site (NTS) municipal landfills, which receive less than 20 tons of waste per day, be permitted or closed by October 9, 1995. In order to be permitted, the existing landfills must meet specific location, groundwater monitoring, design, operation, and closure requirements. The issuance of these regulations has resulted in the need of the Department of Energy (DOE) to provide a practical, cost-effective, environmentally sound means of solid waste disposal at the NTS that is in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local regulations. The current landfills in Areas 9 and 23 on the Nevada Test Site do not meet design requirements specified in new state and federal regulations. The DOE Nevada Operations Office prepared an environmental assessment (EA), (DOE/EA-1097), to evaluate the potential impacts of the proposal to modify the Area 23 landfill to comply with the new regulations and to close the Area 9 landfill and reopen it as Construction and Demolition debris landfill. Based on information and analyses presented in the EA, DOE has determined that the proposed action would not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*). Therefore, an environmental impact statement (EIS) is not required and DOE is issuing this FONSI.

**COPIES OF THE EA AND FURTHER INFORMATION ON DOE'S NEPA PROCESS ARE
AVAILABLE FROM:**

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SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Class II landfills which are currently used in Areas 9 and 23 do not meet design requirements specified in new state regulations and must cease operations by October 9, 1995. At that time, the Area 9 Landfill would undergo a partial closure and reopen as a Class III, Construction & Demolition debris landfill. Partial closure would include construction of a barrier layer to isolate the Class II waste that was disposed of prior to the October 9, 1995 deadline. The soil for the barrier layer would be obtained from an area located in the vicinity of the crater. Baseline moisture measurements and background measurements would be obtained through the installation of several neutron monitoring tubes inside and outside the crater, respectively. The life expectancy

of the Area 9 disposal site as a Class III landfill would be at least 70 years, based upon current waste disposal rates. When the Class III landfill is closed after an estimated 70 years, the final closure plan outlined in the permit application would be implemented.

In conjunction with the partial closure and resumed operation of the Area 9 Landfill, the Area 23 Landfill would remain in operation as a Class II landfill and would receive putrescible and nonputrescible waste. In order to comply with state and federal regulations, the landfill would be modified to include systems for run-on/run-off control and to monitor groundwater through the installation of wells or other alternatives.

Soil obtained for the Area 9 landfill covers would result in the loss of vegetation and displacement of wildlife over approximately 23 acres for the Class II cover and approximately 14 acres for the final cover. Prior to project initiation, a survey would be conducted to determine the presence of any sensitive plant species. Since the range of the desert tortoise does not extend north to Area 9, there would be no loss of any threatened or endangered wildlife species. There would be no effects to biological resources at the Area 23 landfill.

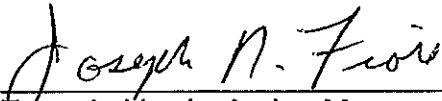
A cultural resource inventory would be conducted prior to the start of the project to determine the presence of any artifacts or historic properties that may be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. National Register eligibility would be determined through consultation with the Nevada Historic Preservation Office.

Impacts on air quality would be minor and temporary, resulting primarily from emissions from construction equipment and fugitive dust. Construction areas would be sprayed with water to minimize dust.

Several alternatives to the proposed action were also considered by the DOE and included: taking no action, construction of a new C&D landfill, modification and use of the Area 23 landfill for all NTS solid waste, and offsite disposal. Under the no action alternative, use of the Area 9 and Area 23 landfills in their existing condition would continue beyond the deadline of October 9, 1995 and would result in willful violation of state and federal laws. A new Construction and Demolition debris landfill would require construction of run-on control berms, drainage ditches and culverts, a concrete pad, fencing and gates, and widening and upgrading the access road. Prior to approval by the state of a new landfill, soil permeability tests would be required, necessitating several drill holes. In addition to the high costs of this project, the proposed location is in Area 5, which is in the range of the threatened desert tortoise. Use of the Area 23 landfill for disposal of all solid waste at the NTS was also considered. If this option were selected, the life span of the Area 23 landfill would be reduced from approximately 100 years to only 14 years. Shipping waste offsite was considered and found to be cost prohibitive since the closest permitted facility is approximately 90 miles away from the NTS. In addition, the waste would require certification as nonhazardous and nonradioactive prior to acceptance by the offsite facility. Certification of the waste would require construction of a processing facility to examine the contents of the waste containers for hazardous materials. Wastes would also have to be taken to a transfer station prior to leaving the NTS where health protection surveys would have to be conducted to ensure the wastes were not radioactive.

DETERMINATION: Based on the information and analyses in the EA, DOE has determined that the proposed action to modify the Area 23 landfill to comply with the new regulations and to close the Area 9 landfill and reopen it as Construction and Demolition debris landfill does not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.). Thus, an environmental impact statement is not required to implement this action.

Issued this 8th day of September, 1995.



for Terry A. Vaeth, Acting Manager
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