



**COMMISSION ON THE ENVIRONMENT
CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO**

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RESOLUTION NO. 004-98-COE

[Ward Valley Nuclear Waste Dumpsite]

March 10, 1998

OPPOSING THE PROPOSED BUILDING OF A NUCLEAR WASTE FACILITY IN WARD VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

WHEREAS, Ward Valley is located 22 miles west of Needles, California, in the Eastern Mojave Desert region; and,

WHEREAS, This site has been selected by the State of California to receive low-level radioactive waste from commercial nuclear power plants, hospitals, industry and research from throughout the State, including San Francisco County; and

WHEREAS, Ward Valley would most likely become a national nuclear dump site with eighteen states having already expressed interest in dumping at Ward Valley, including states which have recently decided to cancel or delay plans for facilities in their own regions; and,

WHEREAS, The federally mandated 1980 Low-Level Radioactive Waste Policy Act does not mandate any particular technology; and,

WHEREAS, All six of the nation's active and inactive low-level radioactive waste facilities are leaking, and nuclear waste dumps in Sheffield, Illinois; Maxey Flats, Kentucky; West Valley, New York; Barnwell, South Carolina; Richland, Washington; and Beatty, Nevada, have released radioactive materials into the surrounding ecosystem; and,

WHEREAS, All of these facilities use shallow, unlined trenches as their method of disposal; and,

WHEREAS, US Ecology, the contractor selected to construct the Ward Valley facility, has built and operated four of the currently leaking nuclear dumps; and,

WHEREAS, Ward Valley radioactive waste facility is proposing shallow land burial in unlined trenches as a method of disposal; and,

WHEREAS, Scientists with the United States Geological Survey have warned that radioactive wastes buried there could eventually contaminate the Colorado River through five subsurface pathways; and,

WHEREAS, A report by the California State Controller found that clean-up costs from leakage at the Ward Valley facility could be as much as \$500 million, with the majority of these costs being assumed by California taxpayers; and,

WHEREAS, The dump is proposed for an area that is directly above a major aquifer, 18 miles from the Colorado River, in the midst of critical habitat for the federally-listed threatened desert tortoise and on land considered sacred territory by five Native American tribes; and,

WHEREAS, In May, 1997, the Environmental Protection Agency's National Environmental Justice Advisory Committee expressed its concerns about the violation of environmental justice mandates posed by the Ward Valley proposal; and,

WHEREAS, A December, 1997 report by economics Professor Gregory Hayden, of the University of Nebraska concludes that a 89 percent decline in the volume of low-level radioactive waste has occurred in the last sixteen years and that due to excess capacity at existing dumps the Ward Valley facility is neither necessary nor would it be economically viable; and,

WHEREAS, According to a July, 1997 United States Congressional Research Service Report, as much as 90 percent of the radioactivity proposed for burial at Ward Valley would come from nuclear power plants, including cesium, strontium, plutonium and other long lasting radionuclides; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Commission on the Environment opposes the proposed Ward Valley nuclear waste dump; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Commission on the Environment urges the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and the Mayor to oppose the proposed Ward Valley radioactive waste repository, and that they send a letter to the President of the United States, San Francisco County's Congressional Delegation and California Governor Pete Wilson explaining their position.

I hereby certify that this resolution was adopted by the Commission on the Environment at its meeting of March 10, 1998.

Christopher Chow
Commission Secretary

VOTE:

Ayes: Commissioners Eng, Evans, Krefting, Okamoto, Richardson, Russell, and Vietor.

Noes: None.

Excused: None.

Commission on the Environment