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Secret Government Data Revealed Showing Radioactive Wastes Leaking at US Ecology Nevada Nuclear Dump Desert Facility Considered Twin to Proposed Ward Valley Site

LOS ANGELES – Secret government data on offsite contamination at a desert nuclear waste facility in Nevada were released today, raising new questions about plans to build a similar facility in Ward Valley, California. The measurements, made by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) beginning more than a year ago but kept secret until now, contradict earlier claims by Ward Valley promoters that nuclear dumps in arid locations cannot leak. Supporters of the Ward Valley project have claimed that the radioactive waste facility near Beatty, Nevada, should be considered proof that the proposed Ward Valley dump would be safe.

“This revelation is the smoking gun in the Ward Valley fight,” said Daniel Hirsch of Committee to Bridge the Gap, a Los Angeles-based public interest group that released the data today. “Ward Valley boosters pointed to the Beatty dump as proof that Ward Valley wouldn’t leak,” said Hirsch, “Now we know, without question, that Beatty leaks like a sieve. So will Ward Valley.”

Ward Valley is located less than 200 miles southeast of the Beatty site and less than 20 miles from the Colorado River. The Beatty facility was operated by US Ecology, the same company chosen to construct and operate the Ward Valley site. US Ecology and the Wilson Administration have repeatedly said that Beatty should be considered an analog for the Ward Valley project.

Members of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) panel that studied the Ward Valley site have sent a letter informing Interior Department Secretary Bruce Babbitt of the significant new finding. The letter also urges Secretary Babbitt, who controls the land at Ward Valley, not to transfer the land to the State of California without “provisions for in-depth studies at the Beatty Facility to establish why long-term waste containment has not occurred.” The NAS