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## 6. YUCCA MOUNTAIN: Reid declares storage proposal 'dead' (08/13/2009)

**Eryn Gable, special to E&E**

DENVER -- After decades of battles over the proposed storage of nuclear waste at Nevada's Yucca Mountain, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) says the fight is finally over.

"I'm happy to say unequivocally it's now dead," Reid said of the proposed nuclear waste repository.

Reid made the comments today during a conference that brought together hundreds of Democratic leaders from throughout the West. The conference, organized by Denver-based consulting and research firm Project New West, is focused on strategies aimed at swaying voters to the Democratic Party and included prominent Democratic elected officials such as Colorado Gov. Bill Ritter, Sens. Jeff Bingaman and Tom Udall of New Mexico, and Rep. John Salazar of Colorado.

During his keynote address, Reid highlighted the successes Democrats have had during the first months of the Obama administration, including stepped-up efforts to protect the environment. Reid also noted the success Western Democrats had in the 2008 election.

"But this is no time to rest on our laurels," Reid said. "That's why we're here in Denver. Now is the time to build our success, strengthen Western Democrats, build a deeper bench of candidates, bring Western issues to the national stage, even more so."

Bingaman echoed those sentiments, noting that there is still work to be done, including completion of landmark bills to reform the U.S. health care system and to cap U.S. emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. "We have a lot left to do this year," he said.

Bingaman did note that Democrats have made major accomplishments in the environmental arena this year, including investing in projects that will help the country make the transition to a low-carbon economy and the passage of a public lands bill that set aside more than 2 million acres of wilderness.

Udall noted that the West is set to be a big player in developing the country's renewable energy sources, highlighting the abundance of resources available in the region, including solar, wind and geothermal.

Udall also warned that the effects of climate change would be keenly felt in the West, noting that the region is expected to experience twice the temperature increase that other parts of the country will have. The impacts of such temperature increases would be dramatic, he said, causing the disappearance of snowpack and alpine meadows and forcing changes in agriculture.

"We're here to make sure that doesn't happen," Udall said.

New Mexico Lt. Gov. Diane Denish (D) also stressed the role the West is expected to play in the "new energy" economy but said it will be important to balance the need for energy with other values, such as conservation and recreation.

"In the West, we create that balance by doing one thing. We bring people to the table -- the ranchers, the environmentalists, the preservationists, the government agencies, the public-private partnerships that really, really work," Denish said.

The conference is intended to bring together Democratic leaders from across the West in the hope of defining ways to address the region's unique challenges, including preserving Western landscapes while helping to meet the country's energy needs.

"By achieving greater clarity and assessing these policy challenges together, we will continue moving the new energy economy forward while honoring what makes the West special," Ritter said.

*Gable is an independent energy and environmental writer in Woodland Park, Colo.*

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