STATE OF NEVADA

AGENCY FOR NUCLEAR PROJECTS/ NUCLEAR WASTE PROJECT OFFICE

BOB MILLER
Governor

ROBERT R. LOUX
Executive Director

DOE/NV/10461--756

TRAC *Technology and Resource Assessment Corporation*

3800 Arapahoe Avenue, Suite 225
Boulder, Colorado 80303
(303) 443-3700 FAX No. (303) 443-8626

**REVIEW OF THE NAS/NRC REPORT:
"GROUNDWATER AT YUCCA MOUNTAIN:
HOW HIGH CAN IT RISE?"**

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Authored by:

C. B. Archambeau

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**Review of the NAS/NRC Report:
"Groundwater at Yucca Mountain: How High Can It Rise?"**

by
Charles B. Archambeau

There are three basic and serious problems that produce disagreement with the conclusions and recommendations of the Academy report. These are: *First, the report ignores a considerable body of critical data relating to the ages and nature of hydrothermal alterations at the site; second, many of the strong conclusions expressed in the report are not reasonably supported by the evidence presented and, in some cases, are inconsistent with data and results available to the committee but which are not cited or used by them; and finally, there are statements describing field relationships and data that are not consistent with the facts or are made in such a way as to be misleading.*

Zircon Age Data: Evidence for Hydrothermal Activity

An example of what can be regarded as a misleading characterization of data is given on page 44 of the report. The Academy Panel states:

"Fission - track dating of eroded fragments of (or detrital) zircons found in carbonate that cements AMC - type fault breccia at Trench 14 and at Busted Butte gives a spread of ages showing heterogeneity of source material, with some zircon ages older and some younger than the age of the bedrock in the immediate region (Levy and Naeser, in press). However, within the analytical uncertainty, most of the ages are about 10-12 Ma, or about the same as those of the dominant volcanic rocks in the region."

However, the Levy and Naeser reference states (p. 17):

"The spread in ages from each sample indicates that there are zircons from multiple sources present. In both samples there are crystals significantly younger and significantly older than the age of the tuff." (Emphasis added.)

In the following paragraph Levy and Naeser go on to show plots of these data and state the basis for their confidence in the observed spread in zircon ages as follows (references quoted are omitted):

"One way to illustrate the spread in the ages is through the use of a probability density distribution plot. The probability density plot sums the normal distribution curves for all the grains in a sample. These curves are calculated from an age and its standard deviation. Figure 6 shows an example of a sample with a single age population; the Fish Canyon Tuff zircons are used as a primary age standard for most fission-track laboratories in the world and the probability curve exhibits a normal distribution. In contrast, samples HD-41-4 and HD-74-2 both show multiple age peaks (Figures 7 and 8). The ages of the individual grains are shown in the histogram beneath the probability curves for all three samples."

The data shown by Levy and Naeser in their Figures 7 and 8 are reproduced in the attached Figure 1. These data clearly show the multiple peaks identified by Levy and Naeser. *Contrary to what is stated by the Panel*, most of the zircon crystals analyzed from each sample show dates considerably less than the Potassium-Argon ages of the host tuff (13 Ma), rather than greater than the age of the tuff. Further, the Panel implies an age for the host tuff of 10-12 Ma, while it is clearly stated to be 13 Ma.

As seriously misrepresentative is the neglect of the Panel to indicate that the authors clearly use the term 'significant' in a technical sense. In fact, the Panel report does not even mention that the authors themselves attach significance to peaks in the distribution and that they do *not*, in any way, suggest that *"within the analytical uncertainty the ages are about the same as those of the dominant volcanic rocks in the region."* This is the Panel's statement, but they do not distinguish this assertion from the previous sentence referencing the paper by Levy and Naeser. They thereby induce the reader to assume that this statement is consistent with the results of the authors. In this way they do not have to explain why their characterization of these data is different from that given by the authors, or even mention that a difference exists.

An examination of the age data, as given in Figure 1, shows that there are ages 4.8 Ma, 6.2 Ma, 7.5 Ma, and 7.7 Ma among the crystals in these two samples. There are

Figure 1. Fission track ages of zircons from breccias at Busted Butte (top) and Trench #14 (bottom). From Levy and Naeser, 1991.

several additional dates near 8.5 Ma. The two sigma interval attached to the youngest age, of 4.8 Ma, is 2.5. Thus, there is very high confidence (over 90%) that the age of heating of this crystal was between 2.3 Ma and 7.3 Ma, with the highest probability for a specific age being 4.8 Ma. The same interpretation of confidence intervals applies to the other ages given. Clearly, characterizing these age data as being within the age range 10-12 Ma, given "analytical uncertainty," is incorrect. It is on this inaccurate basis that the Panel states that (p. 3):

"The preponderance of features ascribed to ascending water clearly (1) were related to the much older (13-10 million years old (Ma)) volcanic eruptive process that produced the rocks (ash-flow tufts) in which the features appear,..."

This conclusion is actually directly contradicted by the age data cited.

This issue is extremely important in that these are the only age data used in the NAS report to substantiate the claim that the last and final hydrothermal event occurred some 13 to 10 Ma ago. Age data from uranium series dating of calcites from veins at depth as well as potassium-argon dates from zeolites, which are commonly produced by hydrothermal alteration of volcanic glasses, were ignored by the Panel. However, as shown in Figure 2, many young ages are present in these data as well, some as young as 30 ka. In view of the preceding description of what is actually represented in the zircon age data, and in view of the zeolite and calcite vein age data, it is evident that high temperature annealing of fission tracks occurred at times much more recently than 10 Ma and that related hydrothermal alteration produced the observed young zeolites along with the recent calcite and opal veins throughout the mountain. Indeed, it is likely that analysis of additional zircon samples would show more recent ages, like the age data from the zeolites and calcites. Therefore, contrary to the Panel's statements, the age data actually support the occurrence of recent (post-Timber Mountain) hydrothermal activity rather than providing evidence against it.

Figure 2. Ages of Fluid Alterations at Yucca Mountain

Field Observations: Spring Mounds, Faults and Surface Calcretes, Zeolites and Glass

Besides these misleading characterizations of important age data, the Panel has also characterized field observations inaccurately. One example is their statement that the Quaternary hydrothermal spring closest to Yucca Mountain is at Travertine Point, some 55 km away (p. 130). This statement is not correct: the hot springs at Oasis Valley just north of Beatty, Nevada, which were visited by the Panel, are only 25 km from the site. Further, they use the Travertine Point mound deposits to make the argument that springs at Yucca Mountain would also have to produce mounds, implying that all springs should produce mounds regardless of their topographic location or the chemical content of the water. However, the nearby springs at Oasis Valley do not now appear to be forming mounds. Likewise other springs in the region, at Boulder Dam and Dixie Valley, are not producing mounds. On the other hand, some of the many hot springs at Tecopa, CA (which is in the general area) are producing mounds, but others in this same area are not.

Consequently, the Panel has generalized from one example to establish a necessary criterion for ancient spring activity (the presence of mounds) and apparently presumed that the near proximity of the example to Yucca Mountain would provide the necessary justification. However, they are wrong on all counts: the example used is not the closest to Yucca Mountain, and mounds are sufficient but not necessary to establish spring activity. Indeed, water emerging from fault zones on a steep slope would not be expected to produce mineral mounds, but instead should produce slope parallel deposits, such as the calcrete deposits at Trench 14 and around Busted Butte.

Yet another example of importance is the Panels' statement (p. 33) in response to the idea that the observed calcretes at Busted Butte are produced by water flowing from up-slope fault zones. Here the Panel report rejects the idea on the basis of their own observation that there are no faults up-slope from these deposits. However, available geologic maps show at least one major fault zone at higher elevations at Busted Butte,

contrary to this statement.

These two examples are important in that the Panel uses lines of argument built upon these statements to assert, in their overall conclusion statement, that:

"The preponderance of features ascribed to ascending water clearly... (2) contained contradictions or inconsistencies that made an upwelling ground - water origin geologically impossible or unreasonable,..."

Another line of "evidence," considered by the Panel as contradictory or inconsistent with an upwelling water origin, is the zeolite and glass distribution with depth. Specifically citing the depth distribution of zeolites and glass as its evidence, the Panel states (p. 48):

"The boundary between the altered and vitric tuffs indicated that the water reached its highest levels and receded downward from 12.8-11.6 Ma, and that since that time the water level at central Yucca Mountain has probably not risen more than 60 m above its present position."

However, it is not possible to find the support cited for this conclusion from the actual data, which are shown in Figure 3. In particular, the observations show that, in some drill holes, glass is present hundreds of meters below the present water table. Further, zeolites are also present hundreds of meters above the water table. Thus, the distributions of zeolite and glass do not produce a simple relationship with the water table, that is both glass and zeolite occur above and below the water table making it impossible to establish a boundary and an ancient receding level for the water table based on these data.

In regard to the latter, it is important to point out that the Panel did not mention that the K-Ar dates of the zeolites in question range from 2 to about 10 Ma, as shown in Figure 2, and are much younger than the host ignimbrites. Further, the youngest zeolites are near the surface and the oldest are at depths below the water table. If the water table reached its highest level at 12.8 - 11.6 Ma and receded downward from that

Figure 3. Distributions of glass and zeolite relative to the water table. Drill hole locations are distributed within and very near the proposed repository at Yucca Mountain with the exceptions of VH-2 and VH-1 in Crater Flat to the West and J-13 and J-12 in Jackass Flat to the East.

time to its present level, the opposite depth-age relationship for the post-10 Ma zeolites would be expected. Indeed, this depth-age relationship is what would be expected for an upwelling hydrothermal origin of the zeolites. Furthermore, this is the process generally accepted as being responsible for zeolitization in any case.

Isotopic Data: Comparisons Between Vein Calcites and Ground Water

A second major problem with the Panel report is that the strong conclusions produced by the Panel are either not reasonably supported by the evidence presented or are inconsistent with data and analysis results not cited in the report. This represents a class of problems differing from the previous cases, where the data cited are at least consistent with what is reported in the literature (though insufficient to support the conclusions drawn). However, the data cited are, nevertheless, not sufficient to support the conclusions drawn.

An example of this situation arises from the Panel's statements (e.g., p. 52 & p. 148) that the isotopic ratios for strontium, uranium and thorium for the near-surface vein calcites at Trench 14 and Busted Butte do not match the measured ground water values and therefore that ground water cannot have been responsible for their deposition. Here they compare the isotopic ratios in the calcites to those characteristic of meteoric water at shallow depths below the water table level. At these depths the water resides in volcanic tuffs and does indeed have discordant isotope ratios relative to the surface calcites. However, what the Panel fails to mention is that the isotopic characteristics of the water change with depth, since its isotopic character depends on the host rock properties. Specifically, a strontium isotope ratio measurement from the only well that penetrated the Paleozoic limestones at Yucca Mountain gives a value significantly higher than those from the shallower water in the tuffs, and close to the moderately high values observed in the surface veins in question. Further, while values from yet deeper water, including that in the Precambrian below the limestones, have not yet been

obtained at the site, the samples from older rocks at other sites, particularly in Precambrian rocks and Paleozoic shales, show very high strontium isotopic ratios in the range and higher than those observed in the Yucca Mountain and Busted Butte calcite veins, which average around .7125. The relationships of strontium ratios to rock types are illustrated by the data compiled in Table 1, where rhyolites and tuffs have low ratios around .707, limestones have ratios near .709 while Precambrian rocks have high ratios near .717.

Consequently, it is very likely that if water were convected upward from depths of the order of 3 km or deeper at Yucca Mountain it would have high strontium isotopic ratios and when mixed with the shallower water, which has lower strontium ratios, would produce the moderately high strontium isotopic ratio values observed in the near surface vein calcites. A similar argument applies to the other isotopes, although in the case of uranium series isotopes it is more complex (Archambeau and Price, 1991).

It is significant that the Panel offered no discussion of why the strontium ratios at Trench 14 and elsewhere at Yucca Mountain are so high, relative to observed limestone values. Certainly if these vein and associated calcrete deposits are simply due to the evaporation of rainwater carrying calcium and strontium picked up in solution from wind blown dust from (rather distant) limestone outcrops, as is asserted by the Panel, then one would expect to see strontium ratios near the limestone values of .709 rather than the much higher values that average .7125. Surely one could make the argument that there is no apparent support for such a pedogenic origin based on the isotopic data. Indeed there is every reason to doubt this hypothesis in view of the very discordant values observed in the strontium ratios of the surface calcites at Yucca Mountain relative to the values to be expected from the available sources of wind-transported calcite near Yucca Mountain.

Thus, the Panel has ignored important consequences of a "pedogenic origin" for the calcites and have also ignored the possibility of upwelling from greater crustal depths, where it is known that the isotopic ratios of the water would be different from those

Location	Rock	$^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$	Source	Note
Unaltered Ignimbrites				
Long Valley Caldera	Inyo Domes Rhyolites	0.70630	Goff et al. (1990)	mean of 3 samples
do	do	0.70606	do	mean of 7 samples
do	Mafic and Intermediate	0.70630	do	mean of 3 samples
do	Moat Rhyolites	0.70601	do	mean of 6 samples
do	Early Rhyolites	0.70665	do	mean of 2 samples
do	do	0.70716	do	hydrothermally alt
do	do	0.70742	do	do
do	Bishop Tuff	0.7070	do	mean of 2 samples
do	do	0.70713	do	mean of 6 samples
do	do	0.70645	do	sanidine separates
do	do	0.70745	do	hydrothermally alt
do	Pre-caldera Volcanic	0.70610	do	mean of 3 samples
representative mean value: 0.70667				
Paleozoic Carbonates				
Spring Mountains	Limestone	0.70913	Peterman (1990)	outcrop
do	do	0.70823	do	do
do	do	0.70837	do	do
Ash Meadows	do	0.70990	do	do
Rock Valley	do	0.70934	do	do
representative mean value: 0.70899				
The Precambrian Basement				
Round Vly. Peak, CA	Schist	0.71656	Goff et al. (1990)	PC-derivative
do	Hornfels	0.72201	do	do
do	Sandstone	0.71126	do	do
Dish Hill, CA	Granodiorite	0.7177	Peterman et al (1970)	xenolith
representative mean value: 0.71688				

Table 1. Strontium isotopic ratios of unaltered ignimbrites, paleozoic carbonates and Precambrian rocks of the western Basin and Range Province. The high strontium isotopic ratio (> 0.71) of Yucca Mountain alteration products and calcite veins is indicative of a deep crustal source.

in the shallow water. Further, it is known, or can be inferred, that the ratios from the deep sources of water would be close to those observed in the vein calcites. Instead, they have implicitly assumed that either convection from such large depths does not happen or simply ignored the evidence of the changing isotopic character of the water with depth and formed the conclusion that ground water in general cannot be responsible for the calcite vein deposits at the site. Since Wood and King (1992) show that the volumes of outflow at the surface (approximately $.5 \text{ km}^3$) in the vicinity of the Borah Peak (Idaho) and Hebgen Lake (Montana) earthquakes can be explained as upward water flow ("seismic pumping") along fracture zones from depths at least as great as 5 km, it is clear that the possibility of upwelling of water from the Paleozoic and Precambrian should have been addressed by the Panel. Since they neither take note of the upwelling evidence given by Wood and King nor consider the changing isotopic ratios in the water with depth, their conclusion appears inappropriate and, in fact, might clearly be reversed when all the pertinent data are considered.

Indeed, even the limited data used by the Panel to support their conclusions can be interpreted quite differently. Specifically, the shallow water near the top of the water table should be representative of infiltrating rain water in areas at and near Yucca Mountain where there is no upwelling of convected water from depth. Such "sink areas" are extensive at Yucca Mountain and the water at depth should be representative of infiltrating rain water. If this water does not have isotopic characteristics matching the vein calcites, which it does not since the strontium ratio for such water is .7105, then the logical conclusion is that infiltrating meteoric water (which would have taken any available calcium and strontium from wind-blown dust into solution) does not have isotopic characteristics that are compatible with the observed vein calcites. This observation, as well as those given previously, contradict the Panel's general conclusion that these vein calcites are *"classic examples of arid soil characteristics recognized world-wide."* Further, rather than showing that the isotopic character of the vein minerals versus that of the shallow ground water rules out upwelling ground water as a source of the calcite-opal veins observed, the lack of agreement between the isotopic

characteristics of the vein calcites and the shallow water at Yucca Mountain can be interpreted to mean that pedogenic hypothesis advanced is not supported by the pertinent isotopic data.

Water Level Changes at Devils Hole

Another example of a conclusion that is not reasonably supported by the evidence and data cited is the water level data at nearby Devils Hole. The Panel cites evidence (pp. 35, 55) that the ground water level exposed in the open cavern at this location has not fluctuated by more than 10 meters in the last 45 ka. In addition the Panel cites evidence from other studies that imply that the water level has been below the land level, which is 16 meters above the ground water level, for the last several hundred thousand years. However, the Panel fails to mention, or take account of the fact, that the Devils Hole Cavern occurs in an isolated outcrop with its opening elevated above the surrounding area and that within this nearby area there are many active springs. Thus, any rise in the water table would result in greater surface outflow from the active springs and so prevent any rise in the Devils Hole water level above about 10 meters. Consequently, the water level data in the Devils Hole Cavern does not reflect upward rises in the water table, although declines in the level should be correlated with declines in the water table in the area. In this regard, there is some evidence that the water level in the cavern may have been lower in the past than at present. In any case however, the Panel's argument that the water table has probably been stable for a long period of time, based on lack of evidence for any rise in the water level at Devils Hole greater than 10 meters, is not correct.

Age Data, Low Grade Metamorphic Alteration and Temperature Data

The final area of major concern with the Panel's report is the neglect of the very large body of data relating to the ages and character of hydrothermal alterations at the

site. The Panel uses very limited data, and principally the zircon age data previously discussed, to argue that the last hydrothermal event occurred about 10-12 Ma ago. However, in addition to the zircon age data, which actually implies much more recent activity, there is an additional body of data that also indicates that there has been ongoing hydrothermal activity.

This data involves the age data shown in Figure 2 in combination with paleogeotherm estimates inferred from oxygen isotopes, rock alteration temperatures from zeolitization and illitization processes in rocks at Yucca Mountain, vein formation temperatures from fluid inclusions, and finally, zircon annealing temperatures from the samples at Trench 14 and Busted Butte. All of this inferred temperature data, shown in Figure 4, indicate high temperatures and high geothermal gradients existent at Yucca Mountain in the past. Since the age data shown in Figure 2 are from samples in close proximity to the locations sampled for the temperature estimates, and in the case of the zircons are the same samples used to estimate annealing temperatures, there is little doubt that the high temperatures and gradients are associated with very recent hydrothermal activity at Yucca Mountain. In particular, the K-Ar and uranium-series dates for zeolites and calcium carbonate vein material, respectively, indicate episodic and moderate to high temperature hydrothermal activity that has continued from 13 Ma to essentially the present. In addition, the zircon ages and annealing temperatures also indicate post-Timber Mountain hydrothermal activity involving quite high temperatures for the fluids involved. Finally, all the geothermal gradients inferred from heat flow and oxygen isotope data are sufficient to produce convection and are therefore consistent with a history of hydrothermal activity.

The fact that the Panel did not consider any of the data pertaining to paleotemperatures and ignored all the age data, except that for the zircon ages which they misrepresented, has resulted in a description of the recent geologic and hydrologic history of the site that is almost certainly incorrect. Indeed, the only uncertainty that might still be entertained is whether the youngest ages, of less than 500 ka, are correlated with the high temperatures indicated in Figure 4. This can be cleared up

Figure 4. Borehole samples from Yucca Mountain reveal alteration products formed at high temperatures, indicating that the site has been invaded by high temperature fluids.

by additional sampling of course, but in any case there is no reasonable doubt that hydrothermal alteration and deposition occurred well after the time of 10 to 12 million years ago claimed by the Panel. Once this Panel conclusion is recognized as unsupportable in the face of the available quantitative age and paleo-temperature data, it only becomes a question of how frequently and how recently the episodic hydrothermal activity has occurred. The available data shown in Figures 2 and 4 clearly suggest that it has been frequent enough and recent enough to justify the belief that it will most likely continue and that it could occur at any time in the future.

In addition to ignoring age and paleo-temperature data, the Panel did not address the significance of the reported mineral enrichment of interstitial fluids extracted from pores within the tuffs above the water table (Smith, 1991). Relative to local fluids within fractures in the tuffs, the interstitial fluids are strongly enriched not only in alkali-earth elements, but also in transition, base and noble metals and rare earth elements (REE) which at least suggest, if not require, a hydrothermal origin. Table 2 indicates the observed enrichment of several elements found in this trapped water, expressed as a ratio of abundances relative to the element content in nearby well water. Clearly, the presence of noble and base metals is indicative of a hydrothermal fluid. Further, in addition to an overall enrichment of REE, there is an unusual enrichment of heavy REE relative to light REE that is not shared by the host ignimbrites. This enrichment is illustrated in Figure 5 where the normalized REE abundances versus increasing REE atomic weight are shown for the interstitial fluids (a) and local ignimbrites (b). Clearly the abundance trend versus atomic weight is quite different for the ignimbrites compared to the interstitial water. Specifically, the relative enrichment of heavy REE in the interstitial water is conspicuous and since it is also observed elsewhere for hydrothermal solutions that are concentrated in CO_2 (Michard and Albarede, 1986; Michard et al., 1987), it is certainly likely that these fluids are remnants of late hydrothermal fluids.

Table 2
Mineral Enrichment of Vadose-Zone Interstitial Fluids

ELEMENT	ENRICHMENT Ratio *
Magnesium	10
Calcium	8
Nickel	1000
Copper	50
Zinc	45
Rubidium	2
Strontium	30
Yttrium	100
Molybdenum	300
Iodine	20
Tungsten	300
Platinum	**
Gold	**
Titanium	20

*Data are from borehole UZ#4 (interstitial fluids) normalized by J-12 and J-13 well waters (Smith, 1991).

**Well waters contained no measured gold and platinum. Interstitial fluids contained .2 ppb for both metals.

Table 2. Mineral enrichment of vadose-zone interstitial fluids relative to well waters residing in ignimbrite fractures.

Figure 5. Chondrite-normalized REE abundance patterns. a.) interstitial fluids and well water residing in Ignimbrite fractures: data from Smith (1991). b.) Crater Flat ignimbrites: data from Scott and Castellanos (1984). Heavy REE enrichment for interstitial fluids is due to high CO_2 pressure.

The inference of a high CO₂ content for these remnant hydrothermal fluids is important in that a high gas content would be consistent with an interpretation of gas assisted fragmentation and brecciation during hydrothermal fluid intrusion and account for observed intense brecciations of the country rock associated with late carbonatization at many sites at Yucca Mountain. This inference, while not conclusive in itself, does certainly bring into question the Panel's conclusion that (p. 46):

"...there is no need for, or good evidence in support of, upwelling of deep hot waters to account for the brecciation (of near-surface country rocks) or silica - carbonate cementation."

If the Panel had presented the fluid inclusion data along with the temperature and age data in their report, it seems unlikely that they could have made such a statement or, if made, have made it sound plausible in the face of the evidence.

A related Panel statement involves the fault breccia cement at Trench 14. The Panel conclusion states (p. 44):

"...that the fault breccia cement at Trench 14 and Busted Butte is of pedogenic or surficial origin, based on the presence of older detrital zircons, grain size and structure characteristics, and is not of hydrothermal origin."

As noted earlier, the zircons are not as old as indicated by the Panel and in any case do not provide an age estimate for low to moderate temperature hydrothermal deposition (see the temperature range for zircon fission track annealing indicated in Figure 4), while the small grain size of the calcite cement could be expected to occur as a consequence of rapid release of CO₂ from a hydrothermal fluid near or at the surface (Archambeau and Price, 1991). Further, the "structure characteristics" referred to by the Panel are precisely those interpreted by others, such as Hansen et al. (1987), as being characteristic of hydrothermal brecciation.

Thus, the strong conclusion drawn by the Panel is certainly not warranted by the observations they cite, in that other interpretations are at least as plausible if not preferable. But beyond these alternative interpretations, it is once again evident that the

Panel should have used additional available data to infer the origins of the silica-carbonate breccia cements and veins at Yucca Mountain. In this regard Table 3 provides a clear indication of the unusual enrichment of the breccia cement in base and noble metals relative to the stratigraphically equivalent background values for the tuffs at Trench 14. The results in the third column are the median values for 25 analyses of nine breccia samples while the fourth column indicates the significant enrichment of the most strongly mineralized specimen. The fifth column shows that the degree of enrichment of the interstitial fluids (discussed earlier) is comparable with that of the more strongly mineralized breccia samples. Such enrichment contradicts the hypothesis of a pedogenic origin for the breccia cements and combined with the previously mentioned age and temperature data is strong evidence for a hydrothermal origin of the breccia, which is of post-Timber Mountain age.

Beyond the omissions of the data and results already mentioned, the Panel does not address several other topics and related data of considerable importance. In this regard, in situ stress measurements, such as those by Healy et. al. (1984) and Stock et. al. (1984, 1986), are clearly critical to an assessment of geodynamic stability of the site. These observations were not considered by the Panel. However, contrary to the Panel's assessment that the Yucca Mountain area is not likely to experience a large earthquake in the near future, the results from Healy et al. and Stock et. al. imply the opposite. Indeed, the recent 5.6 magnitude earthquake at Little Skull Mountain, 15 km southeast of Yucca Mountain, also indicates that an unstable stress state, rather than a quasi-stable state, actually prevails.

Consequently, at least in part because of their lack of consideration of a large body of the most quantitative and unequivocal data, the Panel reached many conclusions that are not supported by the complete body of data that exists.

Table 3
Mineral Enrichment of Breccia Cement

ELEMENT	ENRICHMENT			
	TIVA CANYON LITHOPHYSAL TUFF FROM EXILE HILL •	MEDIAN, TRENCH #14 BRECCIA CEMENT •	MAXIMUM, TRENCH #14 BRECCIA CEMENT •	INTERSTITIAL FLUIDS **
Ag	2	2	16	
As	1	3.6	36	
Au	<1	2	5	
Cu	.25	1	4	50
Mo	7	18	650	300
Pb	14	65	610	1-5
Sb	<1	25	100	
Zn	44	90	33	45
Bi	<1	<1	<1	

*Data from Weiss (1990); the maximum values of enrichment are for a single sample (3SW195B) with the highest overall mineral enrichment relative to average concentrations for the Yucca Mountain area (Castor et al., 1989).

**Data from Smith (1991); enrichment relative to well water.

Table 3. Mineral enrichment of breccia cement: results for lithophysal tuff and interstitial fluids are shown for comparison.

General Comments on the Panel Report

In addition to a general disregard of important quantitative data and a rather cavalier approach to elementary logic, the Panel not only distorted some of the data and interpretations reported in the literature (such as the zircon age data) but also misrepresented the concepts described by Szymanski in his 1989 report on hydro-tectonic activity at the Yucca Mountain site. To make matters worse, the Panel also misrepresented the information given to them during a presentation by the minority members of the DOE External Review Panel (Archambeau and Price). Specifically, the NAS/NRC Panel states, on page 129 of their report:

"It should be noted that the charge to the panel included an evaluation of the particular concepts described in the report by Szymanski (1989). Those concepts involved seismic pumping as the primary mechanism for driving the deep ground water to the surface in a cyclic progression of crustal stress changes. The panel evaluated the geologic evidence presented for this process and found both the evidence and the seismic pumping model inadequate to support the consequences attributed to them. As the panel was concluding its studies, the "minority" members of the 5 member external review panel selected by DOE and Szymanski to review his report informed the NAS panel that both the interpretation of some of the evidence and the model itself had changed: that Szymanski no longer believed that seismic pumping alone could drive the water up as high as he had stated in his report, and that he now had a new concept involving a thermally driven hydrotectonic cycle. This information was presented at the NAS panel's last meeting. Although there was no time left for the NAS panel to give consideration to a new thesis, nor was there a written document that could be evaluated, the cyclical concept as presented to the NAS panel appeared to have little validity, given that the panel is convinced that the geologic evidence refutes the assertion that ground water has risen repeatedly 100 meters or more in the recent geologic past. Because an essential part of the "cycle" has not yet happened, there is no basis for postulating a cyclical process whatever the proposed mechanisms involved."

In referring to the minority members' report, the Panel alleges that they were informed that "both the interpretation of some of the evidence and the model itself had changed" and then go on to elaborate that Szymanski now "had a *new* concept involving a thermally driven hydrotectonic cycle." Both of these statements are false.

Specifically, these statements were not made by the minority members. Indeed the material distributed to the NAS Panel by the minority members describes, in very specific terms, the full concept advanced by Szymanski in his 1989 report which includes the concept of a hydrotectonic cycle involving *both* seismic pumping and thermally driven convection of the ground water following a tectonic event, such as an earthquake. This combined response to changes in the hydrologic system was considered to be the cause of upwelling water and associated mineral deposition at Yucca Mountain. Only if the minority members had contradicted their own written summary of Szymanski's 1989 report could they have made the statements attributed to them and that is simply not what occurred, nor realistically is it credible. Furthermore, the minority members presented a summary of their report to the NAS Panel in May of 1991 and submitted their complete report to the DOE in November of 1991. This final report reproduces the material made available to the NAS Panel. Therefore, it is a matter of record that the Panel had ample time to refer to the relevant material, long before they submitted their report in July of 1992, and in addition shows that they misquoted the minority members.

Beyond this distortion of the facts, the Panel misrepresented the content of Szymanski's 1989 report since they assert that he had changed his original concept of seismic pumping as the primary cause of water level changes and introduced a new concept involving thermally driven processes at a time well after writing his report. If the Panel had actually read Szymanski's report they would have found that this latter concept is discussed in considerable detail and was thought to be the principal mechanism for deposition of calcite throughout the mountain.

Therefore, one can only conclude that the Panel did not actually read Szymanski's report, or if they did read it they chose to misrepresent it. In either case this is hardly what would be expected from a NAS panel that is charged with the responsibility of evaluating a report. On this basis alone there would be reasonable grounds to seriously question the Panel's findings as it suggests an inclination to distort and misrepresent the record.

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