

MEDIA RELEASE – DESERT GREENS GREEN PARTY OF UTAH

Desert Greens Green Party of Utah Lead Utah Groups in Continuing to Protest and Demand an EIS on Divine Strake (Nuclear Simulation Blast)

For Immediate Release

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01.12.07- Salt Lake City, Utah - Applauding Governor Huntsman's call for meetings that allow public input regarding the Divine Strake explosion, the Desert Greens Green Party of Utah, Blue Sky Institute and Shundahai Network as members of the Stop Divine Strake Coalition, a coalition of four-dozen indigenous, peace, environmental justice, disarmament groups and Western Shoshone leaders, are echoing the dire need for an EIS.

An s-EIS is needed since an activity like Divine Strake was not evaluated in the original EIS (1996) for the NTS. This would allow more public involvement into the purpose for Divine Strake. Concerned citizens fear that the blast, which is predicted to create a 10,000 foot mushroom cloud, will re-suspend long-lived radioactive contaminants in the soil at the Nevada Test Site, putting Western Shoshone communities, Utahns and other civilian downwind populations once again at risk. Citizens are also concerned that information from the test will lead to the development of new nuclear weapons and the resumption of nuclear weapons testing. The formal EIS process requires public involvement prior to the environmental analysis to develop the "scope" of the study, and follow up comment on a draft document. On December 20th, the National Nuclear Security Agency (NNSA) released a revised Environmental Assessment and disclosed their schedule of public information sessions in Las Vegas, Salt Lake and St. George; but these sessions will not include a public hearing on the issue. Instead, NNSA officials said that the public sessions are basically open house meetings where people can look at informational posters and ask questions.

"In the past, these meetings allowed public verbal input by citizens, allowing everyone present to hear a variety of views," said Deanna Taylor, Co-Coordinator of the Desert Greens. "The meetings as planned were nothing more than slick sales pitches."

Given the decision of the United Nations Committee to Eliminate Racial Discrimination (UNCERD) last March urging the United States to "freeze", "desist" and "stop" actions being taken, or threatened to be taken, against the Western Shoshone Peoples of the Western Shoshone Nation, this is an egregious violation. The UNCERD decision referred to a number of actions and threats including ongoing weapons testing at the Nevada Test Site as well as efforts to build an unprecedented high-level nuclear waste repository at adjacent Yucca Mountain.

"Are we a nation of laws or not?" said Eileen McCabe, former Associate Director of Shundahai Network and Desert Greens National Delegate (to the Green Party of the United States). "The United States selectively condemns nations that violate or are even suspected of violating treaties or UN resolutions, yet we ourselves flout the decision of the CERD committee in finding the US in clear violation of the treaty of Ruby Valley of 1863. This test, and in fact all tests at the Nevada Test site, are destructive acts of trespassing on Western Shoshone land, and should cease immediately."

The purpose of Divine Strake, an explosion of 700 tons of ammonium nitrate and fuel oil that would be 50 times larger than the largest conventional weapon in the U.S. arsenal has not been clarified.

“Originally the Defense Department’s budget documents identified Divine Strake as necessary to determine the smallest proper nuclear yield necessary to destroy underground targets,” said Eileen McCabe. “After questions were raised that information from the blast will aid in the design of new nuclear weapons, NNSA officials stepped back, claiming that there were no nuclear applications for the test.”

Groups remain unconvinced that it is conventional weapons that the U.S. would use on deeply buried targets and tunnels because the sheer mass of conventional explosives that would be needed (~0.6 kiloton, i.e. 600 tons of TNT) would be too large to be practical as a conventional weapon.

“This test is another building block in the development of new weapons,” said Chuck Tripp, 2006 Desert Greens candidate for Salt Lake County Council. “Although we decry even the suspicion of nuclear weapons development by other countries, we find loopholes in laws and refuse to ratify treaties to allow us to continue building new and more lethal weapons. Our continuing and escalating weapons development and testing activities send exactly the wrong message in an unstable world.”

Stop Divine Strake Coalition member groups in Utah and Nevada are hosting press events and protests to encourage citizen resistance and public participation before the February 7th deadline.

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