The Secretary of Energy  
Washington, DC 20585  

February 13, 2015  

The Honorable Dennis Daugaard  
Governor of South Dakota  
Pierre, South Dakota  

Dear Governor Daugaard:  

Thank you for your November 25 letter expressing support for the South Dakota School of Mines efforts to expand research activities in shale, and for permitting the Department of Energy to establish our Deep Borehole Field Test (DBFT) in the state of South Dakota. I appreciate your input on this important topic as part of the Administration’s effort to address the long-term storage of our Nation’s used nuclear fuel.  

I understand that your support is predicated on our agreement that the DBFT not use any radioactive waste, or any other nuclear material beyond conventional geophysical tools. I also understand that your support for the Field Test siting does not imply that the state of South Dakota will accept nuclear waste now or in the future. I want to reaffirm our commitment to the Administration’s approach to addressing the long-term storage of nuclear waste. Essential elements of the Administration’s Strategy for the Management and Disposal of Used Nuclear Fuel and High-Level Radioactive Waste are (1) a phased, adaptive, and consent-based approach to siting; and (2) implementing a comprehensive management and disposal system. Any solution for the final disposition of high-level radioactive waste and used nuclear fuel must be based not only on sound science, but also on achieving public acceptance at the state, local, and tribal levels. I am committed to this consent-based approach.  

While a deep borehole field test would provide better understanding of the feasibility of this disposal concept, it would also provide an opportunity to perform crosscutting experiments related to other scientific and engineering aspects of the subsurface. In addition to waste disposal, we have interests in understanding deep and/or large borehole performance in such diverse fields as geothermal energy production, fossil energy production, and carbon sequestration.  

I greatly appreciate your support of the South Dakota School of Mines and your state’s overall dedication to important scientific research. I also appreciate your invitation to visit the Sanford Underground Research Facility and am hopeful that I may be able to do so in the future. I look forward to a continuing beneficial relationship between the state of South Dakota and the Department of Energy.
If you would like to discuss any of these issues further, please contact me or have your staff reach out to Mr. Brad Crowell, Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs, at (202) 586-5450.

Sincerely,

Ernest J. Moniz