

A LOAN TO BEMOAN



Starting out in life often means starting out in debt
Page 1E

Post-Bulletin Weekend

February 25, 2006 | \$1.75

www.postbulletin.com

WHAT'S IN FOR THE OUTDOORS?

Garden and yard trends for spring
Page 1D



Yucca Mountain 'safe facility'

Prairie Island council members visit proposed waste repository

By Dawn Schuett

schuett@postbulletin.com

Frustrated by the lack of progress on the proposed Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository in Nevada, members of the Prairie Island Indian Community Tribal Council traveled there

Thursday to tour the site.

Three council members were among 40 Minnesotans, including legislators and representatives from Xcel Energy and the cities of Red Wing and Monticello, to take the tour.

In 2002, President Bush signed a resolution for the U.S. Department of Energy to construct an underground repository at Yucca Mountain for the storage of spent nuclear fuel. The plan has faced delays since then.

"There's been talk the

facility won't open or won't even be able to take the spent fuel rods," Ron Johnson, assistant secretary/treasurer for the tribal council, said Friday in a telephone interview from Nevada. "I wanted to see for myself if this is true or not true."

The Prairie Island Indian Community is 600 yards from Xcel Energy's nuclear waste storage, which includes 21 above ground, dry-cask storage units. Prairie Island is about 65 miles north of Rochester.

Tribal council members are advocating for the removal of the waste to Yucca Mountain, which is 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas.

"In my eyes, it's a safe facility," Johnson said. "It's a facility that's remote. It's not going to create any problems for any surrounding areas."

Vicky Winfrey, Prairie Island Tribal Council vice president, said after seeing Yucca Mountain she believes it's the "most logical place for these casks to be stored."

Nevada is fighting the

plan. Critics say it would also be risky to transport nuclear waste by trucks and trains from sites around the country to Yucca Mountain.

Johnson said the military already transports radioactive waste safely, and that there's great danger in continuing to store the waste in close proximity to communities such as Prairie Island.

"...We need to work at relocating all this waste that these plants generate, not only at Prairie Island but throughout the country," Johnson said.