Selection of sites within geohydrologic settings.

Second, the siting provision requiring diversity of geohydrologic settings, as specified in §960.3–1–1, shall be applied to group all potentially acceptable sites according to their geohydrologic settings. Third, for those geohydrologic settings that contain more than one potentially acceptable site, the preferred site shall be selected on the basis of a comparative evaluation of all potentially acceptable sites in that setting. This evaluation shall consider the distinguishing characteristics displayed by the potentially acceptable sites within the setting and the related guidelines from subparts C and D. That is, the appropriate guidelines shall be selected primarily on the basis of the kinds of evidence among sites for which distinguishing characteristics can be identified. Such comparative evaluation shall be made on the basis of the qualifying conditions for those guidelines, considering, on balance, the favorable conditions and potentially adverse conditions identified at each site. Due consideration shall also be given to the siting provisions specifying the basis for site evaluations in §960.3–1–5, to the extent practicable, and diversity of rock types in §960.3–1–2, if the circumstances so apply. If less than five geohydrologic settings are available for consideration, the process shall be used to select two or more preferred sites from those settings that contain more than one potentially acceptable site, as required to obtain the number of sites to be nominated as suitable for characterization. For purposes of the second and subsequent repositories, due consideration shall also be given to the siting provision for regionality as specified in §960.3–1–3. Fourth, each preferred site within a geohydrologic setting shall be evaluated as to whether such site is suitable for development of a repository under the qualifying condition of each guideline specified in subparts C and D that does not require characterization (i.e., subsurface geologic, hydrologic, and geochemical data gathering). Such guidelines include those specified in §960.4–1(a) (postclosure system guideline); §§960.4–2–1 through 960.4–2–8–1 of subpart C (Geohydrology, Geochemistry, Rock Characteristics, Climatic Changes, Erosion, Dissolution, Tectonics, Human Interference, and Natural Resources); §960.5–1(a)(3) (preclosure system guideline for ease and cost of siting, construction, operation, and closure); and §§960.5–2–8 through 960.5–2–11 of subpart D (Surface Characteristics, Rock Characteristics, Socioeconomics, and transportation). This evaluation shall consider on balance those favorable conditions and potentially adverse conditions identified as such at a preferred site in relation to the qualifying condition of each such guideline. For each such guideline, this evaluation shall focus on the suitability of the site for the development of a repository by considering the activities from the start of site characterization through decommissioning and shall support a finding by the DOE in accordance with the application requirements set forth in appendix III of this part. Fifth, each preferred site within a geohydrologic setting shall be evaluated as to whether such site is suitable for site characterization under the qualifying conditions of those guidelines specified in subparts C and D that require characterization (i.e., subsurface geologic, hydrologic, and geochemical data gathering). Such guidelines include those specified in §960.4–1(a) (postclosure system guideline); §§960.4–2–1 through 960.4–2–8–1 of subpart C (Geohydrology, Geochemistry, Rock Characteristics, Climatic Changes, Erosion, Dissolution, Tectonics, Human Interference, and Natural Resources); §960.5–1(a)(3) (preclosure system guideline for ease and cost of siting, construction, operation, and closure); and §§960.5–2–8 through 960.5–2–11 of subpart D (Surface Characteristics, Rock Characteristics, Socioeconomics, and transportation).
§ 960.3–2–2–3 Comparative evaluation of all sites proposed for nomination.

Sixth, for those potentially acceptable sites to be proposed for nomination, as determined by the process specified in §960.3–2–2–2, a reasonable comparative evaluation of each such site with all other such sites shall be made. For each site and for each guideline specified in subparts C and D, the DOE shall summarize the evaluations and findings specified under §960.3–2–2–1 and under the fourth and fifth provisions of §960.3–2–2–2. Each such summary shall allow comparisons to be made among sites on this basis of each guideline.

§ 960.3–2–2–4 The environmental assessment.

To document the process specified above, and in compliance with section 112(b)(1)(E) of the Act, an environmental assessment shall be prepared for each site proposed for nomination as suitable for characterization. Each such environmental assessment shall describe the decision process by which such site was proposed for nomination as described in the preceding six steps and shall contain or reference the evidence that supports such process according to the requirements of §960.3–1–4–2 and appendix IV of this part. As specified in the Act, each environmental assessment shall include an evaluation of the effects of the site-characterization activities at the site on public health and safety and the environment; a discussion of alternative activities related to site characterization that may be taken to avoid such impact; and an assessment of the regional and local impacts of locating a repository at the site. The draft environmental assessment for each site proposed for nomination as suitable for characterization shall be made available by the DOE for public comment after the Secretary has notified the Governor and legislature of the State in which the site is located, and the governing body of the affected Indian tribe where such site is located, of such impending availability.

§ 960.3–2–2–5 Formal site nomination.

After the final environmental assessments have been prepared, the Secretary shall nominate at least five sites that he determines suitable for site characterization for the selection of a repository site, and, in so doing, he shall cause to have published in the Federal Register a notice specifying the sites so nominated and announcing the availability of the final environmental assessments for such sites. This determination by the Secretary shall be based on the final environmental assessments for such sites, including, in particular, consideration of the available evidence, evaluations, and the resultant findings for the guidelines of subparts C and D so specified under the fourth and fifth provisions of §960.3–2–2–2. Before nominating a site, the Secretary shall notify the Governor and legislature of the State in which the site is located, and the governing body of the affected Indian tribe where such site is located, of such nomination and the basis for such nomination.

§ 960.3–2–3 Recommendation of sites for characterization.

After the nomination of at least five sites as suitable for site characterization for the selection of the first repository, the Secretary shall recommend in writing to the President not less than three candidate sites for such characterization. The recommendation decision shall be based on the available geophysical, geologic, geochemical, and hydrologic data; other information; associated evaluations and findings reported in the environmental assessments accompanying the nominations; and the considerations specified below, unless the Secretary certifies that such available data will not be