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UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555

JUN 24 1994

Docket No. 40-8778
License No. SMB-1393

Molycorp, Inc.
ATTN: Mr. George W. Dawes
Radiation Safety Officer
300 Caldwell Avenue
Washington, PA 15301

Dear Mr. Dawes:

SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO MOLYCORP'S PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS TO THE SITE CHARACTERIZATION PLAN

This is in response to your May 26, 1994, letter requesting approval to modify three tasks in the Molycorp, Inc. (Molycorp's) August 5, 1993, Site Characterization Plan (SCP). Your letter indicates that these adjustments are intended to enhance the data obtained for the site characterization study and eliminate redundant and costly tasks. The requested modifications pertain to: (1) infiltration tests in the vadose zone; (2) hydraulic conductivity measurements in the fill zone; and (3) the installation of piezometers.

Change Notice 1 - Infiltration Tests:
The SCP states that the infiltration rate into the Vadose Zone will be estimated from measurements of the subsidence of water versus time in shallow pools of water on the ground surface. Instead of attempting to make measurements in natural pools, the measurements will be made in accordance with ASTM D5126-90 and D3385 using a Double Ring Infiltrometer.

Change Notice 2 - Hydraulic Conductivity Measurements in the Fill Zone:
The SCP states that trenches will be excavated in the fill material, and that a pump test shall be performed by pumping water from the trench. Instead of pumping from an excavated trench, two three-foot diameter wells will be installed and a pump test performed at each well.

Change Notice 3 - Piezometer Installation:
The SCP calls for 80 percent of the boreholes to be completed as temporary piezometers. Instead, all borings in the northeast portion of the site will be completed as piezometers, since the spacing between some boreholes is relatively large. In the northwest portion of the site, where the boreholes are closely spaced (10 meter grid spacing), piezometers will be installed in approximately 25 percent of the boreholes. In the southern portion of the site, piezometers will be installed in approximately 80 percent of the boreholes as originally described in the SCP.





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NRC staff has reviewed Molycorp's proposed SCP modifications and finds these changes acceptable. Therefore, Molycorp should proceed in implementing these changes to the site characterization now under way at the site.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me at 301-415-6635.

Sincerely,

Original Signed By

Chad Glenn, Project Manager
Low-Level Waste Management and Decommissioning
Projects Branch
Division of Waste Management
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

cc:
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