



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

September 1, 2000

Mr. Michael Long, Field Supervisor
Wyoming State Office
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
4000 Morrie Avenue
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82001

SUBJECT: INFORMATION REQUEST ON PROTECTED PLANT AND ANIMAL SPECIES

Dear Mr. Long:

Rio Algom Smith Ranch Project (RAS) has applied to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) for renewal of its license to conduct solution mining for uranium in Converse County, Wyoming, as shown on the enclosed map. The goal of the project is to extract up to 20 million pounds of uranium as U_3O_8 per year over a period of at least 20 years.

The proposed mine area is 16,200 acres with four native vegetation types including bottomland sagebrush, mixed sagebrush grassland, rough breaks, and upland grass. Surface disturbance would include the wellfield pattern areas during wellfield construction, up to 20 acres for lined evaporation ponds, mineral processing and water-treatment facilities, wellfield header houses, pipeline routes, pump stations, and access roads. It is anticipated that no more than 700 acres would be disturbed during the life of the project.

RAS has conducted plant and animal surveys of the project area. The only listed, proposed, or candidate threatened or endangered species that has been observed on the site is the bald eagle which has been observed over the project area during migration. Based on the information available, NRC staff currently has no reason to expect any additional listed, proposed, or candidate threatened or endangered species to occur on or near the site. Please forward any information or concerns regarding effects of this planned mining project on any such species, as well as any other ecological concerns U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service may have. NRC will use this information in preparing an environmental assessment for the renewal of the license.

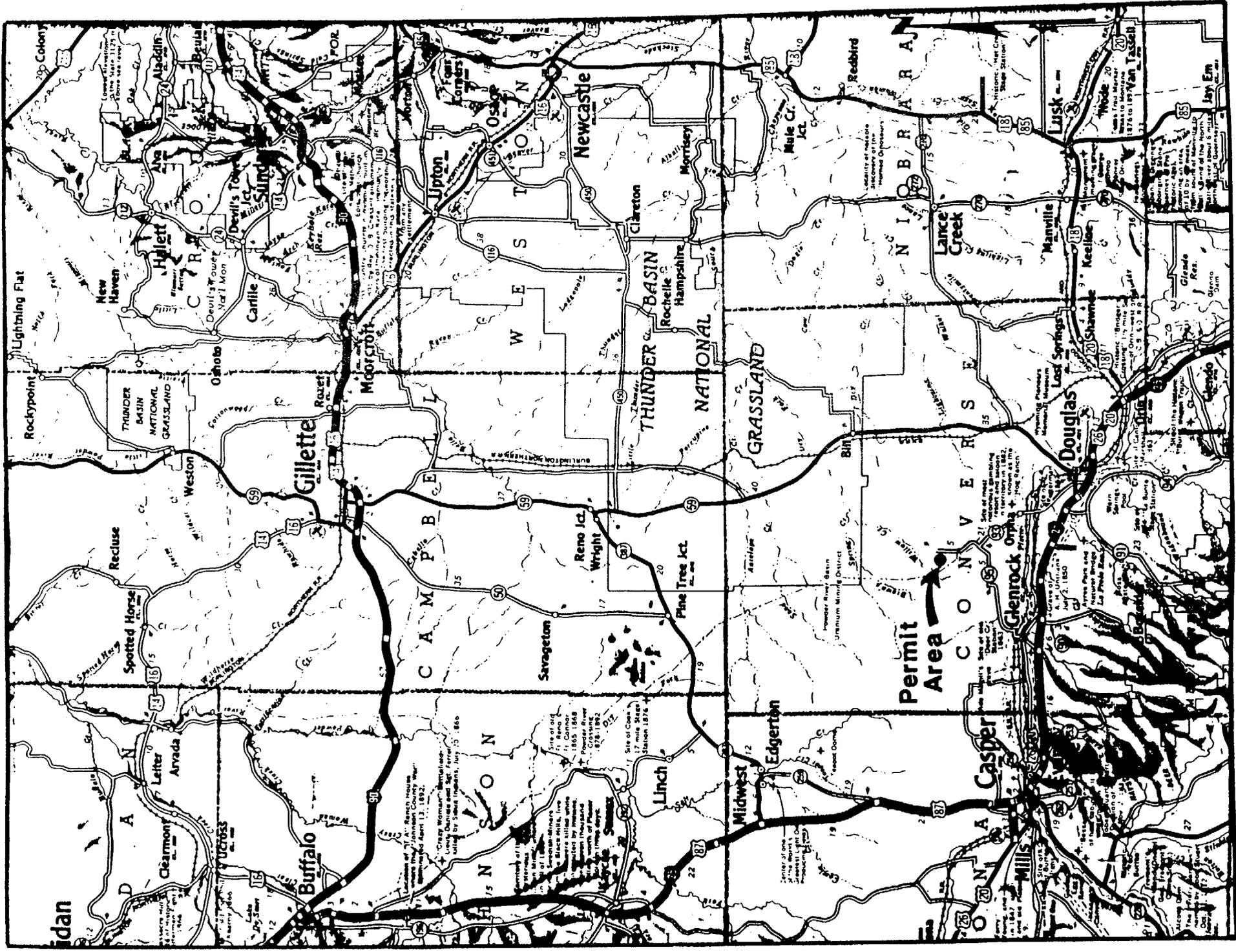
In accordance with 10 CFR 2.790 of the NRC's "Rules of Practice," a copy of this letter will be available electronically for public inspection in the NRC Public Document Room or from the Publicly Available Records (PARS) component of NRC's document system (ADAMS). ADAMS is accessible from the NRC Web site at <http://www.nrc.gov/NRC/ADAMS/index.html> (the Public Electronic Reading Room).

If you have any questions on this matter, please contact John H. Lusher of my staff at 301-415-7694 or by e-mail to jhl@nrc.gov. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Philip Ting, Chief
Fuel Cycle Licensing Branch
Division of Fuel Cycle Safety and Safeguards
Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards

Enclosure: As stated



LOCATION OF and ACCESS TO
RECOVERY PLANT SITE

Mr. Michael Long, Field Supervisor
 Wyoming State Office
 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
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 Cheyenne, Wyoming 82001

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/s/
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