

May 1, 2001

Donna Wichers, General Manager
COGEMA Mining, Inc.
935 Pendell Boulevard
P.O. Box 730
Mills, WY 82644

SUBJECT: COGEMA 'S REQUEST FOR TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF SAMPLING OF
WELLS WITH LOW WATER DURING RESTORATION

Dear Ms. Wichers:

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has reviewed COGEMA Mining, Inc's (COGEMA) request dated March 1, 2001, for approval to temporarily suspend groundwater sampling of certain perimeter ore zone monitoring wells in Mine Unit 5 at the Christensen Ranch Project. The water level in eight of these wells has dropped below the pump setting during the sweep phase of restoration. The COGEMA request included a commitment to continue measuring water level depths in these wells on a monthly basis to determine when pumped samples can again be obtained. The NRC staff considers that the ground water sweep pumping, which causes the water level to drop in the monitoring wells, provides adequate assurance that extraction fluids will not migrate beyond the wellfield. The staff has determined that it is not practical to attempt sampling under the conditions described and that the temporary suspension of sampling does not represent a hazard to public health or the environment.

The NRC staff considers a temporary suspension of sampling, as described in the request, acceptable. The approved suspension would extend to any perimeter ore zone monitoring well at the Irigaray or Christensen Ranch facility (Source Material license SUA-1341) where the groundwater level has dropped below the pump setting due to wellfield pumping for groundwater sweep restoration.

If you have any questions concerning this letter, please contact Elaine Brummett, the NRC project manager for the Irigaray and Christensen Ranch facilities, at (301) 415-6606 or by e-mail to esb@nrc.gov.

May 1, 2001

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Sincerely,

/RA/

Daniel M. Gillen, Acting Chief
Fuel Cycle Licensing Branch
Division of Fuel Cycle Safety
and Safeguards, NMSS

Docket No: 40-8502

Source Material License: SUA-1341

cc: G. Mooney, WDEQ - District III
R. Poyser, COGEMA

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Sincerely,

/RA/

Daniel M. Gillen, Acting Chief
Fuel Cycle Licensing Branch
Division of Fuel Cycle Safety
and Safeguards, NMSS

Docket No: 40-8502
Source Material License: SUA-1341

cc: G. Mooney, WDEQ - District III
R. Poyser, COGEMA

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