

July 17, 2001

MEMORANDUM TO: Melvyn Leach, Chief
Fuel Cycle Licensing Branch
FCSS/NMSS

FROM: Kenneth R. Hooks, Senior Project Manager /RA/
Uranium Recovery Section
Fuel Cycle Licensing Branch,
FCSS/NMSS

SUBJECT: SUMMARY OF MEETINGS TO DISCUSS GROUNDWATER
CORRECTIVE ACTION AT HOMESTAKE URANIUM MILL SITE

Attached for your information is a summary of the meetings which Bill von Till and myself participated in at the Homestake Mining Company's Grants Mill site near Grants, New Mexico. The meetings were arranged by the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) to discuss groundwater corrective action at the Grants Mill site. The meetings were attended by representative of NMED, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 6, and Homestake.

Contact: Kenneth R. Hooks, NMSS/FCSS/FCLB
(301) 415-7777

Attachment: Summary of Meetings

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MEETINGS TO DISCUSS GROUNDWATER
CORRECTIVE ACTION AT HOMESTAKE URANIUM MILL SITE
JUNE 27-28, 2001

On June 27 and 28, 2001, Ken Hooks and Bill von Till, Uranium Recovery Section, Fuel Cycle Licensing Branch, participated in meetings at the Homestake Mining Company's Grants Mill site near Grants, New Mexico. The meetings were arranged by Mary Heather Noble of the Groundwater Pollution Prevention Section of the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) to discuss groundwater corrective action at the Grants Mill site. The meetings were attended by representatives of NMED, NRC, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 6 Office, and Homestake.

The Grants Mill site is licensed by the NRC, and is also an EPA Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act of 1980, as amended (CERCLA) site; under a December 1993 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the NRC and EPA, the NRC is the lead Federal Agency responsible for overseeing the reclamation of the site. Surface reclamation of the site is essentially complete, except for items associated with the groundwater corrective action program.

Homestake is presently pumping contaminated water from both the tailings pile, and the contaminated aquifers, and either evaporating the water or processing it through a reverse osmosis plant and reinjecting the clean product water to create/maintain hydraulic gradients to prevent further spread of contaminants. Homestake is also pumping water from some off-site areas which have been contaminated and using the water to irrigate alfalfa. The cleanup of the off-site areas is not currently in the NRC license or Homestake's Corrective Action Plan, but Homestake is preparing a revised plan which will include cleanup of off-site contamination.

The meeting on Wednesday, June 27, 2001, was attended by Roy Cellan of Homestake; George Hoffman, Homestake's contractor hydrologist; Mark Purcell from EPA Region 6 (replacing Petra Sanchez as the EPA Remedial Project Manager), and Mary Heather Noble. Birgit Landin, and Abbie Phillip (who is replacing Birgit Landin) from the NMED Superfund Oversight Section also attended the Wednesday meeting. On Thursday, June 28, 2001, Roy Cellan, George Hoffman, and Mary Heather Noble met with Ken Hooks and Bill von Till. Neither Mary Ann Menetrey nor Scott McKittrick of NMED were able to attend either meeting, due to other business.

On Wednesday the meeting consisted of a site tour and discussion of the site history, groundwater corrective action program and results to date, and future plans for groundwater corrective actions. Homestake estimates that the groundwater standards will be reached by 2008. The NRC staff believes that it is unlikely that the standards will be reached by 2008, and groundwater Alternate Concentration Limits (ACL's) may be needed.

At the present time, Homestake is having discussions with NMED about renewal of NMED Discharge Permit (DP) -200 (the application was filed with NMED on 7/14/2000). Discussions on Thursday mainly involved NMED's concerns about the Commission's policy decision (SECY-99-0277) that the NRC has exclusive jurisdiction over both the radiological and non-radiological hazards of 11e.(2) byproduct material. NMED appears to believe that it should continue to have concurrent jurisdiction over the non-radiological constituents of concern in the groundwater.