



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

December 10, 1997

William Paul Goranson, P.E.
Manager, Radiation Safety, Regulatory
Compliance and Licensing
Rio Algom Mining Corp.
Suite 325
6305 Waterford Boulevard
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
73118

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD ON DRAFT
STANDARD REVIEW PLAN FOR *IN SITU* URANIUM EXTRACTION LICENSE
APPLICATIONS

Dear Mr Goranson:

I am responding to your letter dated November 20, 1997, which was received at the NRC on December 8, 1997. This letter contained a request to extend the public comment period on the Draft Standard Review Plan for *In Situ* Uranium Extraction License Applications. After considering your request along with the request of others for an extension, I must inform you that we are unable to extend the public comment period beyond December 8, 1997. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has an immediate need for a focused set of procedures in the review of *in situ* leach applications. This Standard Review Plan (SRP) will provide the staff with those much needed procedures. In addition, the resources available to work on this activity are only available through March 1998. The December 8, 1997, comment date was based on the time frame needed to receive and consider comments consistent with a March 1998 completion date.

I recognize that the SRP is the first time all of the NRC review procedures and acceptance criteria have been consolidated into a single report. However, much of the information currently contained in the SRP has previously been made available to the industry for quite some time. For example, Appendix D, "Effluent Disposal at Licensed Uranium Recovery Facilities," was issued as staff guidance in 1994. Similarly, Appendix E, "Recommended Outline for Site-Specific *In Situ* Leach Facility Reclamation and Stabilization Cost Estimates," comes from the staff position on surety instruments which has been publicly available for nearly 10 years. Finally, many of the regulatory guides cited as acceptance criteria have been available to the public for more than 10 years.

Not only has nearly all of the information contained in the SRP been publicly available for many years, the NRC staff held a public meeting in Riverton, Wyoming on March 19, 1997, to obtain suggestions on the content of the proposed "Standard Review Plan for Uranium *In Situ* Mining Applications." This meeting was attended by members of the National Mining Association, the Wyoming Mining Association, the Uranium Producers of America, individual licensees, and the general public. Also, on June 5, 1997, a groundwater mini-workshop was held with the uranium

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mining industry and the public. This workshop covered various groundwater issues of interest to the uranium in situ mining industry; including a presentation on the status of the SRP.

In summary, it is important to recognize that much of the information currently cited in the SRP has been publicly available for many years. The SRP merely pulls together this information in a single, focused document that can be used in future reviews. Additionally, because of the limited availability of resources to work on this project, and the pressing need for a single comprehensive review guide, we cannot extend the period of public comment. If it is possible to do so, comments received after the end of the public comment period will be considered when finalizing the SRP. If they cannot be considered at that time, the staff will consider those comments in any future revisions to the SRP.

If you have any questions on the SRP schedule, please feel free to contact the NRC Project Manager for the SRP development, William Ford. Mr. Ford can be reached at (301) 415-6630. However, as stated in the October 22, 1997, notice in the Federal Register, all comments should be written and be sent to the Chief, Rules and Directives, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555.

Sincerely,



Joseph J. Holonich, Chief
Uranium Recovery Branch
Division of Waste Management
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

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Sincerely,

[Original signed by]

Joseph J. Holonich, Chief
Uranium Recovery Branch
Division of Waste Management
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and Safeguards

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