

DOCKET NO.: 040-08778

LICENSE NO.: SMB-1393

FACILITY: MOLYCORP, INC., METAL ALLOY FACILITY, WASHINGTON, PA

SUBJECT: ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR ISSUANCE OF AMENDMENT NO. 8 TO MATERIALS LICENSE NO. SMB-1393, MOLYCORP, INC., METAL ALLOY FACILITY, WASHINGTON, PA (TAC #J60492)

## **SUMMARY**

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is considering a license amendment (License Amendment No. 8) to approve an alternate decommissioning schedule for Molycorp, Inc., (licensee) at its facility in Washington, PA. The objective of decommissioning the Molycorp, Inc., Washington, PA, facility is to remediate radiological constituents to the extent required to allow the NRC to release the property for unrestricted use and terminate the NRC radioactive materials license for the facility (SMB-1393). In connection with the review of this action, NRC staff has prepared a safety evaluation report (SER), which evaluates conformance of this action with NRC regulations and regulatory guidance.

An earlier, and more extensive Environmental Assessment (EA), was prepared for License Amendment No. 5 (reference A) and was based on the NRC staff evaluation of the Molycorp, Inc., final decommissioning plan (reference B). The NRC staff determined that all steps in the proposed decommissioning could be accomplished in compliance with the NRC public and occupational dose limits, effluent release limits, and residual radioactive material limits. In addition, the staff concluded that the approval of the decommissioning of the Molycorp, Inc., Washington, PA, facility in accordance with the commitments in NRC license SMB-1393 and the final decommissioning plan would not result in a significant adverse impact on the environment. For more details on the facility description, operating history, radiological status, evaluation of decontamination and dismantlement of structures, evaluation of decontamination of outdoor areas, radiation protection programs, and environmental impacts, refer to the EA prepared for License Amendment No. 5 (reference A).

## **Introduction**

Molycorp, Inc., is the current holder of NRC radioactive source materials license SMB-1393 (NRC Docket 040-08778) for the possession of radioactive material resulting from operations at its facility located at 300 Caldwell Ave, Washington, Pennsylvania. License SMB-1393 has been extended until the license is terminated. The license authorizes Molycorp, Inc., to possess at any one time a maximum of up to 120,000 kilograms (kg) (264,554 pounds (lb)) of thorium and 11,000 kg (24,251 lb) of natural uranium in the form of slags and contaminated soils. The license authorizes storage, transfer, and decommissioning in accordance with an approved decommissioning plan (DP). The DP for the Molycorp, Inc., Washington facility was approved in August 2000. Molycorp, Inc., has requested a second alternate decommissioning schedule which extends the cleanup period from the end of 2007 to the end of 2008.

### **The Proposed Action**

The proposed action is to allow Molycorp, Inc., to complete its decommissioning activities in a timely manner. Molycorp, Inc., is proposing to decommission its facility in a phased approach which will take longer than the 2 year period identified in the approved DP. Supplemental characterization of the site has helped to determine the actual volume of contaminated material that needs to be excavated and shipped off-site. Molycorp, Inc., will complete the removal of radioactive material attributable to licensed operations to levels that permit unrestricted use of the site. The large volume of contaminated material that needs to be excavated and removed will take nearly 2 years to complete after the start of excavation in the summer of 2005. Following the removal of material that is above the established release criteria, a final status survey will be performed and the groundwater monitored for any radiological contamination. These actions should be completed by the end of 2008.

### **Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action**

The proposed action is to allow Molycorp, Inc., to decommission its facility using an alternate decommissioning schedule and complete decommissioning by the end of 2008.

### **Alternative to the Proposed Action**

The "no-action" alternative would have been to require Molycorp, Inc., to cleanup its facility by the end of 2007. The amount of contaminated material to be shipped off-site was too large to be completed by the end of 2004.

### **The Affected Environment and Environmental Impacts**

Radiological and non-radiological impacts are discussed in detail in the EA prepared for the decommissioning of the site in License Amendment No. 5. The proposed action does not change the radiological or non-radiological impacts.

### **Agencies and Persons Contacted**

In accordance with NRC Memorandum of Understanding with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP), NRC staff has consulted with PADEP in the preparation of this EA. PADEP had no objection to the alternate decommissioning schedule.

### **Conclusions and Finding of No Significant Impact**

The NRC staff has concluded that there will be no adverse environmental impacts associated with Molycorp, Inc., being granted an alternate decommissioning schedule. Molycorp, Inc., has already removed about one-half of the total amount of contaminated material from the affected areas which greatly reduces the source term for potential exposure to workers, the public, or the environment. The contaminated material is being stockpiled and awaiting shipment to a licensed burial facility. Because contamination beyond what was anticipated was discovered, and is being excavated and shipped offsite, the approval of the request to amend the license

without changes to the current FRN from the end of 2007 to the end of 2008 would be in the public interest.

**List of References**

- A. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, "Environmental Assessment of the Proposed Decommissioning Plan for the Molycorp, Inc., Facility in Washington, Pennsylvania," July 2000.
- B. "Molycorp, Inc., Washington, Pennsylvania Facility Decommissioning Plan, Part 1 Revision," June 1999.

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**List of References**

- A. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, "Environmental Assessment of the Proposed Decommissioning Plan for the Molycorp, Inc., Facility in Washington, Pennsylvania," July 2000.
- B. "Molycorp, Inc., Washington, Pennsylvania Facility Decommissioning Plan, Part 1 Revision," June 1999.

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