



UNITED STATES  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

April 29, 1999

U.S. Department of Energy  
ATTN: Mr. Frank D. Bosiljevac  
Albuquerque Operations Office  
ERD/UMTRA  
P.O. Box 5400  
Albuquerque, NM 87185-5400

**SUBJECT: REPORT OF VISIT TO THE NATURITA, COLORADO, DISPOSAL SITE**

Dear Mr. Bosiljevac:

On March 23, 1998, Ted Johnson and Dan Rom of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff performed a walkover of the completed construction at the Naturita, Colorado, uranium mill tailings disposal site. The site tour was conducted in support of the staff's review of the Naturita Completion Report (CR) submitted by the Department of Energy (DOE) by letter dated March 2, 1999. NRC staff members were accompanied by Paul Oliver (Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment) and Tom Gieck (Umetco Minerals Co.)

Staff observed completed construction, focusing primarily on the placement of riprap on the entire site and the construction of the outlet of Diversion Channel No.2 where it discharges in the canyon downstream of the Uravan Title II tailings disposal cell. Staff also observed the outlet of Diversion Channel No. 1 downstream of the county road crossing.

During the site tour, staff observed that County Road EE22, at its crossing at Diversion Channel No. 1, appeared to be constructed at a somewhat higher elevation than designed. At the time of the site visit, staff could not confirm if the road was actually too high or if it had been constructed properly. Staff discussed with those present the possibility of a potential problem and indicated that there could be a significant problem with the road construction.

On their return to the office, staff reviewed the drawings provided in the Naturita Remedial Action Plan (RAP) and compared them to the as-built drawings provided by DOE in the CR. The drawings indicated that the road had been improperly constructed and was about 1-2 feet higher than designed. The higher road elevation may cause flood flows to overtop the adjacent diversion berm and flow toward the Title II cell. Because this cell may not be able to withstand these additional flows, DOE needs to evaluate the actions that should be taken to prevent overtopping of the berm.

The potential problem with the road elevation was discussed by telephone on April 6, 1999 with the DOE project manager and DOE contractors immediately after the discrepancies with the RAP and the CR were discovered. The problem was also discussed with DOE in a conference call on April 6, 1998. Following those discussions, DOE followed NRC staff suggestions to obtain detailed topography of the road to determine the actual elevations of the roadway and the diversion berm.

F. Bosiljevac

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DOE provided the results of a topographic survey in a faxed submittal dated April 15, 1999. From that information, it is clear that the roadway is too high and that some design modification needs to be made to the road or the diversion berm. In a teleconference on April 18, 1999, DOE indicated that some action will be taken to re-construct the road or to provide justification of the adequacy of the current configuration.

Before the staff can complete its review of the Naturita CR, this issue will have to be resolved. Therefore, your prompt attention to this design change is requested. If you have any questions, please contact the NRC project manager, Robert Carlson, at 301-415-8165.

Sincerely,

N. King Stablein, Acting Chief  
Uranium Recovery and  
Low-Level Waste Branch  
Division of Waste Management  
Office of Nuclear Material Safety  
and Safeguards

cc: P. Oliver, CDH  
L. Woodworth, DOE, Alb.  
E. Artiglia, DOE, TAC

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| DATE | 04/27/99    |  | 04/27/99 |  | 04/29/99 |  | 04/ /99    |

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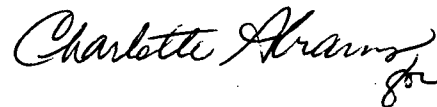
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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Charlotte Abrams".

N. King Stablein, Acting Chief  
Uranium Recovery and  
Low-Level Waste Branch  
Division of Waste Management  
Office of Nuclear Material Safety  
and Safeguards

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