

- Draft minutes of telecon w/ Acoma/NMOSE/NRC

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Date: 10/24/2007 6:35 PM
Subject: Draft minutes of telecon w/ Acoma/NMOSE/NRC
CC: Bill VonTill

All:

Attached are draft minutes of telecon from Monday, Oct. 22. Comments welcome. Wayne, please forward to Myron as I don't have his e-mail address.

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Meeting Summary on Homestake Mining Company's proposed Evaporation Pond #3
October 22, 2007 (Teleconference)

Attendees:

Laura Watchempino, Water Quality Specialist, Pueblo of Acoma, Haaku Water Office
Theresa Pasqual, Director, Acoma Historic Preservation Office
Ron Linton, Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC)
Doug Mandeville, NRC
Wayne Cannon, New Mexico Office of State Engineer (NM OSE)
Myron Armijo, NM OSE

The teleconference started shortly after 12 pm Eastern time.

Issues discussed during the call included:

Pueblo of Acoma concerns about proposed Evaporation Pond (EP3) at Homestake and questions relating to proposed uranium mining and milling in the Grants area. These meeting minutes are from notes taken during the teleconference and may not reflect a complete set of issues raised.

What is the basis of the request for pond EP3? (question from Theresa)

Ron indicated that under the current remediation plan, HMC is expected to complete cleanup activities in 2017 by utilizing EP3. The operation of the current remediation system is limited by the evaporative capacity. By constructing EP3, HMC is anticipating being able to decrease the remediation time by several years (i.e., cleanup activities would be complete several years after 2017).

Is the current remediation system at Homestake containing the contaminant plume?
(paraphrased question from Laura)

Ron indicated that based on the current results and performance of the remediation system the contaminant plume at HMC appears to be contained within the monitoring well boundaries. There is contamination outside of the site boundaries, which has been the case for many years. HMC uses a complex system of injection wells, removal wells, and drains to keep the plume contained. The goal of the remediation system is to flush the remaining contaminants out of the tailings pile and reduce contaminants in the surrounding aquifer to at or below established background standards. NMED, EPA, and NRC are reviewing site data and if conditions warrant, additional monitoring wells, remediation, or other action by HMC may be required.

The footprint of EP3 lies within the San Mateo alluvium, which ultimately feeds Rio San Jose, a source of drinking water for the Acoma (paraphrased statement by Laura)

No response needed.

The Acoma water quality standards apply to both surface and groundwater entering the Pueblo of Acoma reservation. They were adopted in 1998 and were last revised in 2005 (paraphrased statement by Laura)

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No response needed.

What is the source of the water that will be sent to EP3? (paraphrased question from Laura)

Ron and Wayne discussed the existing remediation system and associated groundwater withdrawal at HMC. The remediation system uses a series of groundwater extraction and injection wells to flush the tailings pile and contain the contaminant plume. The site operates under an approved groundwater extraction permit. This permit is reviewed by the NM OSE and is next up for approval in the fall of 2008. The water that will be sent to EP3 comes from the groundwater extraction wells at the site.

Laura indicated that the groundwater rights in the vicinity of the HMC site have not been adjudicated yet (paraphrased statement by Laura)

Wayne indicated that NM OSE follows criteria established by the OSE when deciding on groundwater uses in the Grants/Milan area.

Laura indicated that there has not been any water flowing from the Ojo del Gallo spring (general concern related to water withdrawal rates)

No response needed.

Will there be any air quality impacts in the area resulting from EP3? (paraphrased question from Laura) There were 50 mph winds in the area over the weekend.

Ron discussed the air quality monitoring that HMC performs around the site. HMC continuously samples suspended particulates at 6 locations around the site. Radon gas is monitored on a continuous basis at 8 locations around the site. Gamma exposure rate are continuously monitored at 7 locations around the site. It is anticipated that the proposed location of EP3 will minimize any potential odor impacts. These results are reported by HMC in their Semi -Annual Monitoring Report that are publicly available.

What will happen to soil excavated during pond construction? (paraphrased question from Laura)

Doug talked briefly about the EP3 construction. The Kleinfelder design calls for an above grade surface impoundment. The soil excavated at the site will be used to form the sides of the impoundment and no soil will need to be relocated off-site.

Ron also discussed the previous removal of wind blown tailings near the HMC site. In 1995 the windblown tailing clean up project began, and involved mechanical removal of windblown tailings. A bulldozer was used to remove this material to a point where soil meet the cleanup criteria. Some excavations were over 3 feet in depth. The wind blown tailings were relocated to the tailings pile.

Laura talked about a "dead zone" around Homestake and up towards Rio Grande Resources and requested that more monitoring, including off-site monitoring, be performed. She also asked for assistance in compiling and summarizing the monitoring data (paraphrased comments from Laura)

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Ron discussed the existing monitoring network and how that is designed to identify sources of contamination before it leaves the site. Ron also stated that the without evidence of off-site contamination from HMC beyond the site boundaries, the NRC has no basis to require additional off-site monitoring.

The Taschek cultural resources survey – is it possible to send another copy?

Ron indicated that he will make sure that a copy of the Taschek report is sent to the Pueblo of Acoma.

Are copies of Homestake's documents available at the local public library?

Ron indicated that he will check with HMC on the availability of their documents at the local public library.

What monitoring will be performed for EP3? (paraphrased Laura question)

HMC will perform groundwater monitoring, radiation monitoring, and air quality monitoring in the vicinity of EP3.

Laura asked if inspection reports are available for the site.

Ron responded that all inspection reports are public record and can be found on the NRC web site, "electronic reading room", and searching using the docket number 04008903

Laura questioned if the existing evaporation ponds were inspected following the 2005/6? monsoon season to verify that no releases had occurred.

Doug and Ron discussed the inspection program at HMC. HMC performs daily inspections to verify the condition of the site. In addition, an outside registered professional engineer is required to perform an annual inspection and submit a written report. Wayne, Ron, and Doug briefly discussed the features of the design for EP3. As an above grade surface impoundment, an embankment will be constructed and will be up to 15 ft high. This will prevent any storm water runoff from entering the evaporation pond. Wayne also indicated that the pond design had been submitted to the OSE and was approved.

Laura inquired about the Status of the Rio Algom purchase by URI.

Ron briefly discussed the status of the Rio Algom site. The facility is currently a licensed facility and is undergoing reclamation. The license is currently in decommissioning mode. The mill has been removed and the majority of the tailings pile has been covered. Currently, they are in the process of completing surface reclamation of the evaporation ponds. The NRC's knowledge of the sale of Rio Algom to URI is consistent with what has been identified in a series of newspaper articles. The NRC does not currently have a licensing action or request from Rio Algom or URI.