

From: Philip Hult <philhult@hotmail.com>
To: <NRCREP@nrc.gov>
Date: 8/30/2007 8:08:32 AM
Subject: Uranium Recovery GEIS

To Whom It May Concern:

This is in response to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Federal Register notice dated July 24, 2007 regarding the scope of the proposed Generic Environmental Impact Statement ("GEIS") for in situ leach ("ISL") uranium mining.

I am opposed to a GEIS. The reasons are many.

1) the process by which the NRC arrived at its conclusion to draft a GEIS is fundamentally and legally flawed. There was no public input about whether a GEIS is needed or desirable. Given the site-specific nature of ISL operations, the usefulness of a GEIS is dubious at best. One size fits all is a recipe for disaster.

This process gives the impression that drafting a GEIS that would expedite the ISL licensing process was a foregone conclusion.

2) the scoping process itself has been deeply flawed. Only two public meetings have been scheduled on this matter - one in Casper, Wyoming and one in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Additionally, a special meeting with the National Mining Association was held in Washington, D.C.

None of these communities is the site of any proposed ISL mining operations. Communities that face proposed ISL mining such as Grants, Gallup, Crownpoint and Church Rock, New Mexico, were blatantly omitted. Additionally, the NRC denied entire states, such as Utah, Arizona, Colorado and South Dakota, where ISL mining is proposed, the ability to attend hearings and speak up.

The NRC should, at a minimum, extend the comment period and schedule public meetings in communities that will be affected by ISL mining.

3) if the NRC has concluded, as it appears to have already done, that a GEIS should be drafted, its scope should be very limited. ISL mining is inherently constrained by site specific considerations.

To conclude that the hydrology, water quality, geology, socio-economics, and cultural resources in places as diverse as northwest New Mexico and south Texas - where ISL mining is ongoing and proposed - can be evaluated in a generic manner is absurd on its face.

These issues can only be evaluated on a site specific basis with a site specific

environmental impact statement.

4)relegating these important site specific issues to evaluation in an environmental assessment ("EA") is unacceptable.

The public participation and environmental analysis requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act are much less stringent for EAs than for EISs.

Because the site specific issues are so central to assessing the environmental impact of proposed ISL operations, meaningful public participation and a rigorous environmental analysis are critical. Such issues should not be left for an EA. In fact, in the August 13, 2007 issue of the Gallup Independent, the NRC's Office of Federal and State Materials and Environmental Management Programs Branch Chief Gregory Suber stated that "the potential for fewer public meetings is there" with the EA process.

This policy of attempting an end run around the law to minimize oversight WILL inevitably lead to litigation which WILL lead to longer time frames to gain the approvals for the in situ mining proposals.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my comments on this matter, and please keep me apprised of developments with regard to the GEIS.

Sincerely,

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