

397

From: Sarah Fields <sarahmfields@earthlink.net>
To: <NRCREP@nrc.gov>
Date: Fri, Nov 30, 2007 9:44 AM
Subject: Uranium Recovery GEIS

1/24/07

72 FR 40344

Attached please find Scoping Comments on Proposed Generic Environmental Impact Statement for ISL Uranium Recovery — 72 Fed. Reg. 40344-40346, July 24, 2007, as amended by 72 Fed. Reg. 61912, November 1, 2007.

Sarah Fields
Glen Canyon Group/Sierra Club

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Glen Canyon Group/Sierra Club

P.O. Box 622
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November 30, 2007

Chief
Rules Review and Directives Branch
Mail Stop T-6 D59
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555-0001
via electronic and first class mail

RE: Scoping Comments on Proposed Generic Environmental Impact Statement for ISL Uranium Recovery — 72 Fed. Reg. 40344-40346, July 24, 2007, as amended by 72 Fed. Reg. 61912, November 1, 2007.

Below are scoping comments that supplement the Sierra Club comments submitted on September 4, 2007.

1. Any generic or site-specific Environmental Impact Statement must also address the impacts from historical uranium recovery operations. Some of these recovery operations took place in the vicinity of proposed in situ leach uranium recovery operations. Particularly, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) must seek information on historical activities at recovery sites that were never licensed or had licenses were not terminated or were not properly terminated under NRC, Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), or Agreement State regulatory oversight.

These include sites where the following uranium recovery activities took place: research and development in situ leach operations, old stope leaching, backfilling of mines with mill tailings, heap leaching, and burning of lignite ores for their uranium content. Some of the sites where these activities took place are "lost;" some are documented as part of licensed activities, but the sites where the activities took place were never reclaimed; and some of the sites were licensed, but little or no reclamation took place. Some of the uranium recovery activities took place at sites that were considered to be uranium mines (some of which were licensed by the AEC), rather than mills, but the uranium recovery activities occurred at the mine site or the mine received mill tailings for backfill.

These historical activities AEC, NRC, and Agreement State oversight must be investigated and documented. Licenses must be properly terminated.

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November 30, 2007

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2. At this time, many of the pertinent documents relating to the uranium recovery activities described above have been retired, so they are not available to the NRC, industry, and the public. The NRC should made documentation related to historical AEC and NRC licenses (both for mines and uranium recovery operations) available for the use of the public, industry, and state, tribal, and federal agencies. Without this information there is no way to properly characterize the background radiological and non-radiological characteristics of proposed operations and the cumulative impacts of past, current, and future uranium recovery activities in these areas.

3. The NRC must also characterize and document the sum of all of the environmental impacts from all of the past uranium recovery activities from licensed and non-licensed uranium recovery activities.

4. The NRC must also identify and remedy past regulatory assumptions and practices that have contributed to adverse environmental impacts from uranium recovery activities. For example, failure to properly require groundwater monitoring in the vicinity of all parts of a mill site (such as ore piles) that might contribute to ground and surface water contamination, failure to require adequate surety, and failure to assure that all of the money from a surety will actually be spent on reclamation (rather than on legal fees and administration, as was the case when the Atlas Corporation filed for bankruptcy for the Moab Uranium Mill).

Thank you for providing an additional opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Sarah M. Fields
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