



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC SEEKS PUBLIC COMMENT ON DRAFT GENERIC ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY OF IN-SITU LEACH URANIUM RECOVERY OPERATIONS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is seeking public comment on a draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) for in-situ leach uranium recovery operations in the western United States.

The draft GEIS, developed with the cooperation of the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, identifies and evaluates potential environmental impacts common to the construction, operation, aquifer restoration and decommissioning of in-situ leach facilities in Western states. In-situ leach is a process in which local non-potable groundwater with added oxygen and sodium carbonate or bicarbonate is injected into an underground ore deposit to leach out (or dissolve) uranium, which is then pumped to the surface for additional processing.

The NRC currently expects to receive 20 applications for new uranium recovery operations and 10 applications for expansion or restart of existing facilities through 2011. About 75 percent of these are expected to be for in-situ leach operations. By addressing common issues associated with environmental reviews of these facilities, the NRC staff will use the GEIS as a starting point for its site-specific environmental analyses of individual license applications or as a supplement to previous environmental analyses of existing sites.

The draft GEIS is available on the NRC Web site at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/nuregs/staff/sr1910/>. Public comments will be accepted on the GEIS through Oct. 7. They may be addressed to the Chief, Rules Review and Directives Branch, Mailstop T6-D59, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, D.C., 20555-0001. Comments may also be submitted by electronic mail to NRCREP.Resource@nrc.gov. Please include "Uranium Recovery GEIS" in the subject line.

The NRC staff will hold a series of public meetings in Wyoming, South Dakota, Nebraska and New Mexico, the four states where uranium milling companies have indicated interest in applying for new NRC licenses. Staff members will present the findings of the draft GEIS and accept oral and written comments.

The meetings will be held Aug. 25 in Spearfish, S.D.; Aug. 27 in Chadron, Neb.; Aug. 29 in Newcastle, Wyo.; Sept. 8 in Gallup, N.M.; Sept. 9 in Grants, N.M.; Sept. 11 in Albuquerque, N.M.; Sept. 23 in Gillette, Wyo.; and Sept. 25 in Casper, Wyo. Details of the meetings were published today in the *Federal Register*. (NOTE: The *Federal Register* notice mistakenly reverses the locales of the last two meetings.) The meetings will also be publicized on the NRC Web site at <http://www.nrc.gov> under Public Meetings.

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