2316 Windmill Drive
Spearfish, SD 57783
August 30, 2008

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Chief, Rules and Directives Branch
Division of Administrative Services
Mailstop: T-6D59
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, DC 20555-0001

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Sirs:

I attended the public hearing in Spearfish, SD, on August 25 regarding the GEIS for in situ leach mining in our area and would like to submit the following comments and concerns.

1. I feel the comment period needs to be extended. First, because the document itself is massive and will take considerable time to examine it. And second, because this time of year (August and September) is an extremely busy time for ranchers and farmers in our area as they finish harvesting crops and gather cattle for sorting and sale. The local culture/schedules need to be considered when setting deadlines so that everyone has ample time to understand the issues presented.

2. I am concerned about the lack of staff both at the state and federal levels to carry out adequate monitoring of the mining operations we have in place, not to mention any new facilities. The Wyoming DEQ has said they are woefully understaffed and I am sure the situation is the same in South Dakota. Because of inadequate inspections, accidents have gone unnoticed or unreported for some time (Smith Ranch, e.g.) and this is completely unacceptable. What will be done to remedy this situation? Where will the money to fund inspections come from? And please don't depend on the mining company to do this alone. That's like letting the fox guard the henhouse.

3. Here in the west, water is our most precious resource. And it will continue to become more valuable as the climate continues to change. I am not convinced that any water used in the mining process or in aquifers in the area will ever be usable once mining begins. I am familiar with the contaminated water from the Tuba City, AZ, mining long ago that is just now showing up in the nearby village of Moencopi. Spearfish is downstream from the area being considered for mining in the Black Hills. How will our water be affected?

4. I am also familiar with the damage done by uranium mining in the Navajo Nation. And when my family considered buying ranch property near Jeffrey City, WY, research turned up high cancer rates not only in the ranch families, but in their cattle as well. To be honest, these were not in situ mines, but can we afford to disturb in any way the uranium that lies under the ground? It is like playing Russian roulette with the health and well being of all of us.

Respectfully,

Betsy Mahoney

Betsy Mahoney

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