March 10, 2011

Mark Sattleberg
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Mountain-Prairie Region
Wyoming Field Office
5353 Yellowstone Rd. Suite 308A
Cheyenne, WY 82009

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR INFORMATION REGARDING ENDANGERED SPECIES AND CRITICAL HABITAT FOR THE PROPOSED EROSION PROTECTION ENHANCEMENT PROJECT AT THE UMETCO GAS HILLS FACILITY IN FREMONT AND NATRONA COUNTIES, WYOMING

Dear Mr. Sattleberg:

The Umetco Minerals Corporation (Umetco) uranium mill site is located in the East Gas Hills area of central Wyoming, 50 miles (80 km) southeast of Riverton.[1] The Umetco site is licensed by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) under Source Materials License SUA-648 to possess byproduct material in the form of uranium mill waste tailings, as well as other radioactive wastes generated by past milling operations. The mill operated from 1960 to 1979 and has been dismantled. The current Umetco site consists of three primary tailings disposal areas on the 1,920 acre parcel - the 170 acre Above Grade Tailings Impoundment (AGTI), the 55 acre A-9 Repository, and the 60 acre Heap Leach area. In addition, the Gas Hills Pond (GHP) No 2 area, adjacent to the AGTI and Heap Leach area, also contains waste from heap leach operations.

In July 1999, the NRC approved the enhanced reclamation design for the AGTI and in December 1999 NRC approved the enhanced design for the A-9 Repository. Recent monitoring and inspection activities performed by Umetco of the AGTI and A-9 Reclamation Covers have identified several shallow incisions of the underlying cover soils in isolated locations on the AGTI and A-9 covers. In a letter dated December 21, 2010, Umetco requested NRC approval of enhancements to the erosion protection for the AGTI, the A-9 Repository, the Launch Rock area located at the eastern toe of the AGTI and an area located adjacent to the southeast corner of the reclamation cover toe [Agency wide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) Accession No. ML1036402653]. I have included a copy Umetco's proposed plan for your review.

NRC staff is in the process of evaluating Umetco's license amendment request and is requesting any information that you may have regarding the presence of endangered or threatened species or critical habitat. After assessing the information provided by you, we will determine what additional actions are necessary to comply with the Section 7 consultation process of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended.

[1] The site is located in Township 33 North, Range 89 West of the Sixth Principal Meridian. It includes all of Section 15, the North half of Section 22, the Northeast quarter of Section 21, the East half of Section 16, the Southeast quarter of Section 9 and the South half of Section 10.

In accordance with 10 CFR 2.390 of the NRC's "Rules of Practice for Domestic Licensing Proceedings and Issuance of Orders," a copy of this letter will be available electronically for public inspection in the NRC Public Document Room or from the Publicly Available Records component of NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS). ADAMS is accessible from the NRC Web site at http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html.

If you have any questions concerning this request, please contact me at 301-415-6749 or by email at Dominick.Orlando@nrc.gov

Sincerely,

/RA/

Dominick A. Orlando, Senior Project Manager
Special Projects Branch
Division of Waste Management
and Environmental Protection
Office of Federal and State Materials
and Environmental Management Programs

Enclosure: As stated

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Enclosure: As stated

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