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January 9, 2013

Cindy Bladey, Chief, Rules, Announcements and Directives Branch
Division of Administrative Services
Office of Administration, Mailstop TWB-05-B01M
U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555-0001

RECEIVED

Re: Docket NRC2012-0277, the proposed Dewey-Burdock project

Dear Ms. Bladey:

I would like to comment on the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the proposed Dewey-Burdock project. Would you please see to it that the decision makers involved receive this correspondence?

I have grave concerns about the proposed project and the limited scope of the SEIS. First of all, uranium mining is not unfamiliar to residents of western North Dakota and South Dakota, nor to the physicians who treat cancer patients from this area. Uranium mining is potentially an enormous threat to our health, our families' health, and to our agricultural way of life. A very good friend of mine and her daughter have been stricken with cancer that doctors informed them are common from uranium mined areas. Thus, uranium mining is a serious matter.

There have not been public hearings in my area that have been well advertised. The industry spokespersons have represented the project as safe, simple, and regulated. I question this representation. As I understand it, South Dakota's legislature in 2011 passed legislation to eliminate the state's role in regulating "in situ" leech uranium mining. Is the federal government going to perform this critical role? Is the funding for such regulation appropriated?

Secondly, the industry said in our local paper that this type of mining involves simply injecting "water, oxygen and baking powder" into the mining zone. These harmless ingredients lead residents to believe that there is no danger, and the industry claims there will be no threat to groundwater or underground aquifers. Yet, they admitted that the government had levied a \$50,000 fine against the Nebraska uranium mine in 2008 for "violations including a surface spill, well operations that had the potential to contaminate drinking water and delays in reporting violations." (Rapid City Journal 12/23/2012).

As ranchers, our livelihood depends on clean water. We have learned that the Powertech Uranium Corp., a company that has no experience in such mining, and has insufficient assets to deal with any hazardous mishap, has applied for a "permanent exemption" from the Safe Drinking Water Act. Why? Some information is not being presented to the public.

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My understanding is that radioactive and heavy metal contamination have been observed at all other uranium sites. It is critical that any company prior to licensing, have thoroughly provided for livestock radiation sampling, pump testing, air dispersion modeling, creation of wellfield operational plans, and emergency procedures for truck accidents. The plans presented by a company need to be independently verified. This is especially critical for a company like Powertech that has never mined uranium.

Since all ponds, including radium settling ponds and areas where wastewater is applied to the land are threats to wildlife, particularly birds, it is critical that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission move slowly with ample public hearings in which company officials be clear and straightforward about the dangers present with in situ leech uranium mining.

Finally, the SEIS indicates that 30% of the water treated through the reverse osmosis process will become waste. Powertech has applied for a state permit to extract 551 gallons of water per minute from the Madison aquifer. They have applied for a permit to extract 8,500 gallons per minute from the Inyan Kara formation. The company plans to drill 1500 wells into the Inyan Kara formation (translation: about 12,000,000 million gallons per day; 47 billion gallons in ten years). After the mining process, the company plans to pump the contaminated water "below drinking water sources" or spray it on the ground, a practice that has resulted in a build-up of toxic materials at other sites.

The demand for our water is alarming. We ranchers and farmers, and residents of South Dakota are facing a major drought again this year. Water is critical to our livelihood. We cannot afford to have any of our water sources contaminated with radiation.

As you are aware, the half-life of uranium is millions to billions of years. The potential for contamination is serious. While the impact is less to the larger area of the country, the impact is very high for our smaller area. If any mishap occurs, we cannot "fix" it.

I urge you to deny Powertech a license to mine uranium.

Sincerely,



Laurie Barnaud
Nisland, SD