



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

December 12, 2016

Mr. Mike Thomas
Cameco Resources
Smith Ranch Highland Operation
P.O. Box 1210
Glenrock, WY 82637

SUBJECT: STATUS OF ACCEPTANCE REVIEW FOR RESPONSE TO REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON LICENSE RENEWAL APPLICATION FOR SMITH RANCH HIGHLAND URANIUM IN-SITU RECOVERY FACILITY, CONVESE COUNTY, WYOMING

Dear Mr. Thomas:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of impacts to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff's review schedule for Cameco Resources' (Cameco) request to renew the license for the Smith Ranch Highland uranium in situ recovery facility. The NRC staff issued its request for additional information (RAI) on May 2, 2013. Cameco responded to the NRC staff's RAIs on November 18, 2014 and April 21, 2015. By letter dated May 2, 2016, the NRC staff documented that Cameco's responses to 27 of the 115 RAIs did not provide sufficient information for the staff to be able to proceed with its review.

As Cameco has not provided the sufficient responses to the NRC staff's request for additional information (RAI), the NRC staff will not be able to complete its review within the schedule identified on the NRC webpage for this review¹. Additionally, Cameco has not provided the NRC staff with a firm schedule for resolving the remaining RAIs. The NRC staff will establish a milestone schedule once Cameco provides information on when the remaining RAIs will be addressed. A detailed timeline documenting the interactions since the NRC staff issued its RAIs follows:

- The NRC staff issued its RAI on the Cameco Resources (Cameco) license renewal request on May 2, 2013, (Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) Accession Number ML13098A040).
- Cameco submitted its responses to the NRC staff's request on November 18, 2014, (environmental report, ADAMS Accession Number ML14353A314) and April 21, 2015, (technical report, ADAMS Accession Number ML16063A418).
- The NRC performed an acceptance review of the RAI related to airborne effluent and environmental monitoring (RAI #45) and determined that this RAI response did not contain sufficient information for the staff to proceed. Therefore, the NRC staff issued a

¹ see <http://www.nrc.gov/materials/uranium-recovery/license-apps/smith-ranch/smith-ranch-app-review-schedule.html>)

targeted follow up RAI on this issue on August 7, 2015, (ADAMS Accession Number ML15190A391).

- The NRC staff documented its acceptance review of the remaining RAI responses in a letter dated May 2, 2016, (ADAMS Accession Number ML16109A207). The NRC staff's acceptance review identified that Cameco provided sufficient information on 88 of the 115 RAI responses. The remaining 27 RAI responses do not provide the NRC staff with sufficient information to proceed with its review.
- By email dated June 30, 2016, Cameco stated that it continues to work on its response to the RAI on airborne effluent and environmental monitoring (RAI #45) and does not have an anticipated date for a submittal to the NRC staff at this time (ADAMS Accession Number ML16190A101).

In its June 30, 2016 correspondence, Cameco cited a lack of NRC staff guidance on radon and measurement of radon as a reason for its delay in responding. The NRC staff observes that it has published interim draft guidance on this subject, *Evaluations of Uranium Recovery Facility Surveys of Radon and Radon Progeny in Air and Demonstrations of Compliance with 10 CFR 20.1301* (ADAMS Accession Number ML112720481 and ML13310A198). The NRC staff solicited comments on the interim draft guidance on November 21, 2011 (76 FR 72006) and on March 20, 2014 (79 FR 17194). Additionally, the NRC staff observes that several uranium recovery licensees have successfully developed programs addressing this issue and have received NRC approval. These licensees have implemented monitoring and the NRC is evaluating the results.

Based on the NRC staff's May 2, 2016, letter documenting the acceptance review of the RAI responses and Cameco's June 30, 2016, email, the NRC staff recognizes that additional discussions or submittals will be necessary to resolve these remaining RAIs. The NRC staff observes that the September 2016, public meeting to discuss health physics issues with uranium recovery licensees may have provided Cameco with possible resolutions to the remaining RAI responses. NRC staff are planning an additional workshop on several issues in the area of health physics, including the measurement of radon, to discuss acceptable methods for complying with NRC regulations.

In order for the NRC staff to proceed with its review and establish a revised schedule for completion of the license renewal request, Cameco should provide an updated schedule by which the remaining additional information is anticipated to be submitted. The NRC staff is asking that Cameco provide a schedule within 30 days of receipt of this letter. Once Cameco has provided the information, the NRC staff will complete its acceptance review of the RAI responses. If the responses are considered sufficient, the NRC staff will develop a revised schedule for the completion of the review. The NRC staff would like to discuss your plans to address the remaining RAIs in a public meeting in January 2017. Mr. Douglas Mandeville from my staff will be contacting you soon to schedule such a meeting. Once the RAI responses are determined to be sufficient, the NRC staff will be able to refine the schedule for the remainder of the review.

In accordance with 10 CFR 2.390 of the NRC's "Agency Rules of Practice and Procedure," 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 ADAMS. ADAMS is accessible from the NRC Web site at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html>.

M. Thomas

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If you have any questions concerning the above, please contact Douglas Mandeville at (301) 415-0724 or via email at Douglas.Mandeville@nrc.gov.

Sincerely,

/RA/

John R. Tappert, Director
Division of Decommissioning, Uranium Recovery
and Waste Programs
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

Docket No.: 40-8964
License no.: SUA-1548

cc: Robin Jones, WDEQ

If you have any questions concerning the above, please contact Douglas Mandeville at (301) 415-0724 or via email at Douglas.Mandeville@nrc.gov.

Sincerely,

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Docket No.: 40-8964
License no.: SUA-1548

cc: Robin Jones, WDEQ

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