

UMT 98554



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

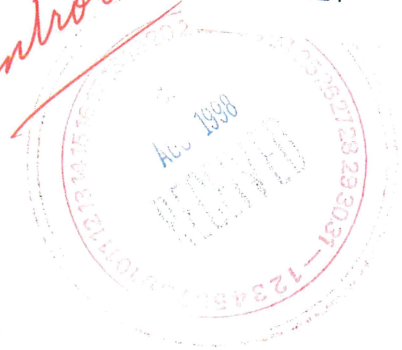
July 8, 1998

Frank

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Mr. George Rael, Director  
ERD/UMTRA  
U.S. Department of Energy  
Albuquerque Operations Office  
P.O. Box 5400  
Albuquerque, NM 87185-5400

SUBJECT: INTERIM LONG-TERM SURVEILLANCE PLAN FOR THE GRAND JUNCTION,  
COLORADO, URANIUM MILL TAILINGS REMEDIAL ACTION DISPOSAL SITE

Dear Mr. Rael:

On January 28, 1998, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) transmitted the results of its review of the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE's) interim Long-Term Surveillance Plan (LTSP, dated August 1997) for the Cheney disposal site, located near Grand Junction, Colorado. The subject LTSP was transmitted by DOE letter dated August 25, 1997. Based on its review, the NRC staff concluded that the LTSP adequately covered the areas of geotechnical engineering and erosion protection; however, the staff identified one open issue related to water resources protection monitoring.

By letter of May 5, 1998, DOE provided page changes to the Cheney LTSP to address staff concerns related to the description of monitoring and proposed inspections of paleochannel wells at the Cheney site. The NRC staff has completed its review of the revised pages and concludes that the changes made by DOE adequately address the open issue. Therefore, the staff considers all issues related to the interim LTSP to be resolved.

NRC's approval of the interim LTSP for the Cheney site authorizes DOE surveillance and maintenance of the portion of the disposal cell documented in the August 1994 Completion Report (CR). After closure of the disposal cell and development of the final CR, in which DOE will document post-August 1994 construction, DOE will update the interim LTSP into a final LTSP for NRC review. The Cheney disposal site will not be incorporated under the general license until NRC concurs in DOE's final CR and accepts the final LTSP.

It is the staff's understanding that responsibility for the Cheney disposal site was transferred from the DOE Albuquerque Office to the DOE Grand Junction Office (DOEGRJ) on April 24, 1998. The Public Law 104-259 amendment to Section 112(a)(B) of the Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act of 1978 authorizes the continued operation of the Cheney disposal site for receiving and disposing of residual radioactive material until the Cheney cell has been filled, or September 30, 2023, whichever is first. DOE, the State of Colorado, and the

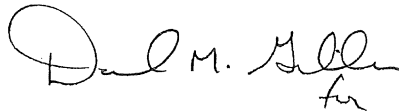
G. Rael

-2-

City of Grand Junction have been working together to develop a plan for the long-term management of tailings encountered after the completion of the surface cleanup phase of Uranium Mill Tailings Remedial Action Project (UMTRA) in September 1998. DOEGRJ has endeavored to keep NRC informed of the progress toward development of that plan, which will form the basis for work procedures and assignment of responsibilities for the identification, excavation, handling, transportation, interim storage, and final disposal of tailings in the Cheney cell after September 30, 1998, and throughout the continued operation of the Cheney site. DOEGRJ also has committed to provide NRC with the final plan prior to September 30, 1998.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact the NRC Project Manager, Charlotte Abrams, at (301) 415-5808.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "D. M. Allen" with a small "for" written below it.

Joseph J. Holonich, Chief  
Uranium Recovery Branch  
Division of Waste Management  
Office of Nuclear Material Safety  
and Safeguards

cc: W. Woodworth, DOE Alb  
F. Bosiljevac, DOE Alb  
E. Artiglia, TAC Alb  
R. Edge, DOEGRJ  
J. Deckler, CDPHE