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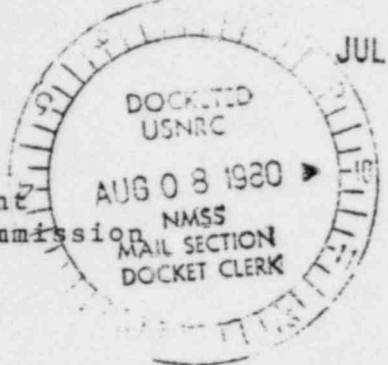
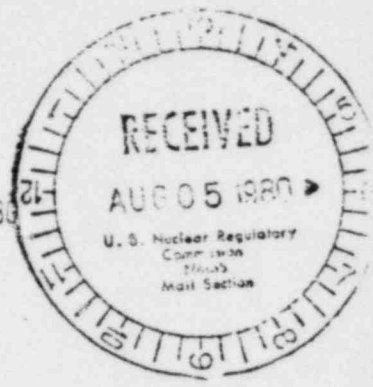
FOR



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

ER 80/569



JUL 23 1980

Mr. Ross A. Scarano  
Chief, Uranium Recovery  
Licensing Branch  
Division of Waste Management  
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Washington, D.C. 20555

Dear Mr. Scarano:

This is in regard to your letter of June 9, 1980, requesting comments from the Department of the Interior on the draft environmental statement for the Bison Basin Project, Ogle Petroleum, Inc., Fremont County, Wyoming. Our principal concern in regard to this project stems from the possible presence of endangered and threatened species. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in a letter of November 23, 1979, from Acting Regional Director H. E. Stiles, indicated that the bald eagle and the black-footed ferret may occur in the project area.

In order to comply with regulations implementing the Endangered Species Act, as amended, biological assessments on the bald eagle and black-footed ferret should be prepared by NRC and submitted to the FWS Regional Director, Denver. In the event it is found that the project may affect either species, a request for formal consultation would be necessary. In the event that no affect would occur according to the assessments, the process would be terminated unless the FWS disagreed with the conclusions drawn in the assessments.

Additional information on the required process may be obtained through informal discussions with Mr. Wayne Brewster, Endangered Species Team Leader, Billings, Montana, or a member of his staff (FTS: 585-6059).

Due to the nature of the project, we are concerned about possible effects to the environment (including surface and sub-surface water, vegetation, ambient air, and soil) from chemical and radioactive substances. We strongly support the protective

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measures outlined in your report to prevent the degradation of the natural environment and associated floral and faunal food chains and urge that the utmost care be taken to ensure their implementation.

The treatment of impacts on fish and wildlife resources and the related natural environment appears comprehensive and generally adequate. However, we stress the importance of full implementation of the following mitigation measures:

1. All fencing should specifically consider antelope and deer populations occurring in the area and provide for their necessary movements, general well being, and safety.
2. All areas of disturbed soil should promptly be graded, replanted, and cared for until good native ground cover is restored.
3. Land reclamation efforts should be designed to re-establish native species of forbs and shrubs which provide cover and food sources for antelope, deer, and sage grouse.
4. Power lines and their supports should be designed and constructed to prevent electrocution of raptors.
5. Waterfowl and other species of wildlife should be prevented from using evaporation ponds.
6. All construction activity, including that necessary to provide access roads and trails to the project, should avoid the destruction of scarce riparian wildlife habitat found in the area.
7. Special effort should be made to keep oil, gasoline, tar, asphalt, cement, biocides, sewage, sediments, refuse, or other man-made byproducts out of the streams and groundwater strata throughout the contract period.
8. Ogle Petroleum, Inc. should stress wildlife preservation and protection of wildlife to all employees working in the area and take necessary action to prevent poaching and harassment of wildlife.

Biologists of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department could best advise on the details of implementation of the above broad recommendations. We urge consistent and positive consultation with that agency as the project progresses.

If Corps of Engineers' permit(s) under Section 404 of Public Law 92-500 are required in connection with the project, the Fish and Wildlife Service will be required to review the application. We may concur, with or without stipulations, or object to the proposed work depending on project effects on fish and wildlife resources which may be identified and evident at that time.

A few corrections or additions are needed in the final statement. Employment figures (3.4.3) should be updated to reflect recent local cutbacks in the uranium mining activity. Uranium recovery comparisons should be made between the various mining alternatives. Consideration should be given to minimizing visual impacts of any construction in this area. If access across the public lands is needed, there should be early coordination by the operator with the Rawlins District Office of the Bureau of Land Management.

We appreciate the opportunity to review and comment on this project in the early stages of planning.

Sincerely,

Special Assistant to

~~Assistant~~ SECRETARY