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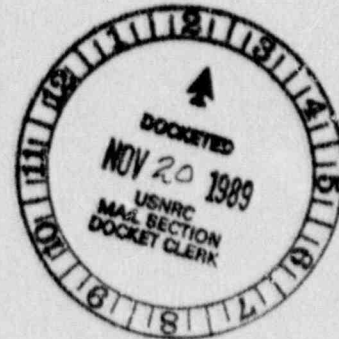


**Department of Energy**

Albuquerque Operations Office  
P.O. Box 5400  
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87115

RETURN ORIGINAL TO PDR, HQ.

NOV 16 1989



Mr. Ramon E. Hall  
Director, Uranium Recovery Field Office  
Region IV  
Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
P.O. Box 25325  
Denver, CO 80225

Dear Mr. Hall:

This letter is a follow up to the Uranium Mill Tailings Remedial Action (UMTRA) Project Office letter dated September 5 regarding the Durango, Colorado disposal cell. The message conveyed in the earlier letter was never intended to imply the Project Office was not taking action to expeditiously address the seep from the tailings and the increased metals concentrations in the monitoring wells. The Project Office considers these to be serious issues and is currently taking appropriate and positive actions to characterize and resolve them.

DEWATERING WELLS

In June 1989, 17 dewatering wells were installed over the deepest part of the disposal cell to evaluate the potential for removing water from the tailings. In July, pumping began at a rate of about 6 gpm; the current rate is down to about 2.5 gpm. Since July we have removed about 500,000 gallons of water. We will continue to pump these wells until winter shutdown in November (perhaps December). A portable wastewater treatment plant was brought to the site and is treating the water prior to discharge.

AQUIFER CHARACTERIZATION

To define the extent of any potential contaminate migration, 15 wells were installed in the area around the disposal cell in September 1989. Several wells were installed in the shallow alluvium at a depth of 60 feet to try and better define the hydraulic properties and background water quality. Approximately half of the wells were installed in the deeper system at a depth of approximately 130 feet, and will be used to monitor the lower system and better define the hydrogeology of the area. Two sets of wells, one shallow and one deep, were installed so pump tests can be performed to define the interconnection between the upper and lower system. We have begun monthly groundwater sampling of four wells: 606, 608, the new background well, and a well placed between the disposal cell and retention pond DS-1. This last well, adjacent to the cell, will help determine the source of contamination in wells 606 and 608.

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PDR WASTE  
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Certified By Mary C. Ford

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Add Info  
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Mr. Ramon E. Hall

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#### TOE DRAIN

A toe drain has been installed on the northeast side of the disposal cell near the seep. This drain will remove water from the seep so that cover placement can begin on the slope where the seep is located next spring.

#### TEST PITS

In late October, three test pits were constructed in the area of the seep expression so samples of the tailings at different depths could be obtained as well as samples of the two-foot clay liner. These samples will be analyzed for several geotechnical properties, including moisture content and hydraulic conductivity.

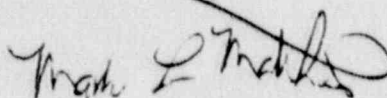
#### GROUNDWATER COMPLIANCE STRATEGY

The groundwater compliance strategy (GCS) for the Bodo Canyon disposal cell will be prepared once the results of these characterization activities are available. The GCS will address how remedial action at the disposal site complies with the EPA proposed groundwater protection standards.

At this time we do not conclusively know the source of the elevated concentration of metals observed in wells 606/608. However, currently we do not believe it results from contaminant migration from the disposal cell. Testing is underway to provide us with the information needed to determine the source of these elements by the end of the year and we will complete our plan for addressing them shortly thereafter.

I hope this letter makes clear our commitment to resolve these issues and provides you with a useful update of the status of our activities at the Durango site. We would like to arrange to meet and discuss this work at your convenience and to meet periodically thereafter to keep you current on our activities as we proceed with remedial action. Steve Hamp of my staff will contact you in a few days to arrange for this meeting.

Sincerely,



Mark L. Matthews  
Acting Project Manager  
Uranium Mill Tailings Project Office

cc:

F. Bosiljevac, UMTRA  
E. Damler, UMTRA  
M. Kearney, TAC  
R. Edge, TAC  
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