



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

PDR

FEB 20 1981

WMUR:WM-20

Mr. Charles W. Luscher
Acting State Director
Bureau of Land Management
U. S. Department of the Interior
1600 Broadway
Denver, Colorado 80202

Dear Mr. Luscher:

This letter is in response to your January 20, 1981, letter to Chairman Ahearne concerning the Pioneer-Uravan, Inc. proposed project in Colorado. You attached a copy of the National Wildlife Federation comments related to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) draft Environmental Assessment for the Pioneer project and requested information to assist in responding to these comments. The following information is offered in response to your specific questions:

1. The proposed Pioneer-Uravan plant differs from the model mill evaluated in the Generic Environmental Impact Statement on Uranium Milling (GEIS - NUREG-0706, Enclosure 1) in several respects. Some examples of these differences include: the mill capacity of the proposed Pioneer facility is only a little over one half of the capacity of the model mill evaluated in the GEIS; the estimated average ore grade for the Pioneer mill is 0.16% as opposed to 0.10% for the model mill; and the mill process proposed for the Pioneer project involves belt filtration dewatering of the tailings, therefore, the tails will be disposed of in a "dry" state as opposed to the tailings being discharged from the model mill in slurry form.
2. The environmental impacts associated with the proposed Pioneer project are evaluated in NRC's technical assistance report submitted to the Colorado Department of Health (Enclosure 2). This report, although limited in scope, includes a complete radiological assessment and an analysis of, and recommendations concerning, the proposed and alternative tailings management programs.



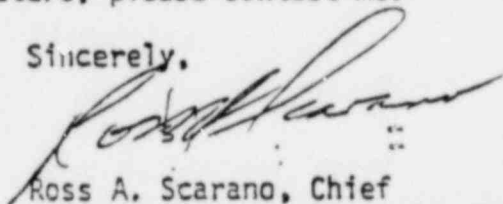
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3. NRC's GEIS on uranium milling provides the basis for the regulations which were issued on October 3, 1980 (Enclosure 3). The technical assistance evaluation which NRC provided to the State, was conducted in terms of these regulations. Although the analysis in the GEIS was obviously performed on a generic basis and site specific reviews will generally be necessary for licensing actions associated with uranium mills, the methodology and information contained in this document can and should be extrapolated where appropriate.

I trust this information is responsive to your request; however, if I can be of any assistance in the future, please contact me.

Sincerely,



Ross A. Scarano, Chief
Uranium Recovery Licensing Branch
Division of Waste Management

Enclosures:

1. Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement on Uranium Milling (NUREG-0706)
2. NRC Technical Assistance Report on San Miguel Uranium Project
3. Regulations: Uranium Mill Licensing Requirements