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Umetco Minerals Corporation



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August 18, 1995

Mr. Joseph J. Holonich, Chief
High-Level Waste and Uranium Recovery
Projects Branch - MS-T-7-J-9
Division of Waste Management
Office of Nuclear Material Safety and
Safeguards
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D. C. 20555-0001

Subject: NRC's Final Position on Review of Previously Approved Reclamation Plans -
NRC's Letter of July 18, 1995

Reference: Teleconference - August 11, 1995, 9:30 a.m.
Participants: NRC - J. Holonich, D. Gillen, M. Haque
Umetco - C. Sealy, J. Hamrick, R. Junge, P. Lyons

Dear Mr. Holonich.

This letter, as requested by NRC during the conference, is to inform you generally of Umetco's deliberations in planning for completion of the reclamation of the previously approved above-ground Inactive Tailings Disposal Site (Inactive Tailings) and the below-grade A-9 Tailings (A-9) impoundment.

During our conversation, we understood the following from statements you made to clarify those in the third paragraph of your letter of July 18

- 1) The NRC staff has not identified any significant health, safety or environmental concern with the previously approved Umetco reclamation site.
- 2) In the light of the recently released publication "Seismic Hazard Analysis of Title II Reclamation Plans", there is a need to reevaluate the seismic design aspects of the reclamation designs.
- 3) If Umetco proposes a revision to the previously, and now currently, approved plans, the NRC would review only the proposed revisions and not reevaluate already approved parts of the plan. You stated as an example that a revision that would clearly result in a more robust design such as increasing the thickness of a rock erosion cover from four (4) inches to six (6)

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would have obvious merit; in such a case, the review would be confined only to this revision (not the whole of the previously approved plan) and, perhaps, rapid approval could be issued.

We also understood and agreed that NRC would suspend indefinitely, the reviews of the Inactive Tailings and A-9 plans which were initiated in NRC's letters of August 4, 1994.

We have confirmed Umetco's intention to reevaluate the seismic stability of the Inactive Tailings and A-9, and in addition to submit revised designs for the final cover to be protected in whole or in part by rock riprap instead of vegetation.

During the conference you asked if, at the Inactive Tailings site, any degradation had occurred to the final cover, which you believed had already been completed. The answer was that the cover was not in fact complete: the construction of the final layer involving a limestone subsoil amendment, a 6-inch minimum thickness of topsoil, chopped straw mulch, seeding and imprinting had been postponed pending the issuance of NRC's final position on the previously approved plans. The present surface of the cover consists of unprotected random fill and seasonally some damage in the form of erosion rills does occur. However, repairs have been carried out as needed during the postponement period.

Now that NRC's final position is known, Umetco has had to consider whether to complete the cover protection with vegetation as previously and now currently approved. Although this may prove quite successful (as it has elsewhere) Umetco has been recently looking at rock covers as an investment to provide a surer way to avoid disputes at the time of license termination as to whether degradation is or is not occurring at an unacceptable rate, i.e. resulting in questionable compliance with the 10 CFR 40 Appendix A 200-to-1,000 year durability criterion.

As we mentioned, these plans are tentative and need work before formal submittal to NRC. You suggested we meet soon at your offices to discuss our proposed course of action in more detail. We are happy to accept your invitation and understand you are in agreement for a meeting to take place late in October, if possible just before or after the next NRC/NMA public meeting.

Sincerely,



Patrick J. L. Lyons
Operations Manager