



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

DEC 07 1990

Mr. Paul H. Lohaus
Branch Chief, Operations Branch
Division of Low-Level Waste
Management & Decommissioning
Office of Nuclear Materials Safety
and Safeguards
Mail Stop 5-E-4
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, DC 20555

Dear Mr. Lohaus:

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) would like to abandon and seal a number of monitor wells at the Cheney disposal site near Grand Junction, Colorado. These wells consist of the three deep Dakota Sandstone wells (completed in the uppermost aquifer) and the remaining Mancos Shale wells.

This issue has been discussed with both Dan Gillan and Mark Thaggard of your staff. The reasons for wanting to abandon these wells are as follows:

1. All necessary information to demonstrate compliance with the Environmental Protection Agency's groundwater protection standards at the Cheney site has been obtained; as such, the wells are no longer needed for characterization or compliance monitoring.
2. The wells interfere with construction activities at the site and must either be abandoned or special provisions must be made to protect the wells from damage or destruction by heavy equipment.
3. The Dakota Sandstone wells are nearly 750 feet deep and intercept numerous hydrogen sulfide gas pockets; as such the wells present a health hazard to water samplers and a potential health threat to other workers if the wells are damaged by heavy equipment. At present, the Dakota wells are equipped with flame arrestors.

The DOE is requesting concurrence on behalf of the NRC in regards to the abandonment and lack of need for these wells.

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Mr. Paul Lohaus

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At present there are no plans to abandon the remaining alluvial monitor wells at the Cheney site. If you have any questions regarding this issue, please contact Don Leske of my staff at (303) 248-6008 or Larry Coons of our Technical Assistance Contractor's staff at (505) 845-5671.

Sincerely,



Mark L. Matthews
Project Manager
Uranium Mill Tailings Remedial Action
Project Office

cc:

D. Leske, UMTRA/GJPO
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