

APR 18 1994

Albert R. Chernoff, Project Manager
Uranium Mill Tailings Remedial Action
Project Office
U.S. Department of Energy
Albuquerque Operations Office
P.O. Box 5400
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87185-5400

Dear Mr. Chernoff:

Sharon Arp, Site Manager for the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Rifle Uranium Mill Tailings Remedial Action (UMTRA) Project, by letters to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission of March 8, 1994, and March 18, 1994, provided descriptions of proposed Phase 1 and Phase 2 testing for the Rifle UMTRA site radon barrier material.

Phase 1 is a bentonite content study to determine the lowest amount of bentonite necessary to provide the desired permeability control for the radon barrier. While staff has no objections to this study, reducing the amount of bentonite in the cover will make it more difficult to achieve a lower cover permeability than the base of cell permeability.

Phase 2 testing is designed to evaluate the relationships of moisture content and compaction as they relate to permeability and is in response to NRC's requirement to perform additional field verification testing on the radon barrier material that will be used for the Estes Gulch disposal cell cover at the Rifle UMTRA site. The description of Phase 2 indicated that the testing will follow the Daniel and Benson procedure. Ms. Arp was given tentative NRC approval of the Phase 2 procedure by telephone prior to April 1, 1994, as requested in her letter. This letter confirms the telephone approval.

The commitment to use the Daniel and Benson procedure should be documented in a revision to the Remedial Action Inspection Plan or in a Class I Project Interface Document.

If you have any questions regarding this issue, please contact the NRC Project Manager, Allan Mullins, at 301-504-2578.

Sincerely,

15/ David M. Gillen

for

Joseph J. Holonich, Chief
High Level Waste and
Uranium Recovery Projects Branch
Division of Waste Management
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

cc: S. Arp, DOE, AL
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