



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

FEB 05 1991

Mr. Steve Hill  
Project Director  
Jacobs Engineering Group  
5301 Central Avenue NE, Suite 1700  
Albuquerque, NM 87108

Dear Mr. Hill:

I want to confirm recent guidance to your staff regarding the Shiprock, New Mexico uranium mill tailings disposal site. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) stated in their final Technical Evaluation Report that the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) needs to assess the extent of contamination and the potential for off-site migration of contaminated groundwater north of Bob Lee Wash, in conjunction with the development of the site Surveillance and Maintenance (S&M) Plan.

The DOE shares NRC's concern about the potential for off-site migration. However, since the terrace alluvium aquifer is not used as a supply of groundwater for drinking or other beneficial purposes, and any potential migration would not significantly impact human health or the environment, the DOE believes that such an assessment is not urgent. Therefore, Jacobs Engineering Group should plan to assess the extent of contaminant migration during the groundwater restoration program. Also, the DOE agrees with your staff that collecting additional groundwater data from existing monitoring wells near the disposal cell will not be beneficial as part of site surveillance and maintenance. These wells could be of beneficial use later as part of the groundwater restoration program.

In conclusion, the DOE does not at this time want to monitor the terrace alluvium aquifer as part of the long-term S&M Plan. If you have any questions, please contact either Michael Abrams or Steve Hamp of my staff.

Sincerely,

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

cc:

D. Gillen, NRC-LLWM  
C. Smythe, UMTRA  
F. Bosiljevac, UMTRA  
S. Hamp, UMTRA  
C. Watson, JEG  
R. Glover, JEG

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PDR WASTE  
WM-58 PDR

ADD: DGillen

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