



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

July 10, 1996

County Commissioners
Garfield County, Utah
55 South Main Street
Post Office Box 77
Panguitch, Utah 84759

Dear Commissioners:

I am responding to your June 10, 1996 letter to Chairman Jackson expressing concern about the timeliness of uranium recovery facility reviews by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff. You were particularly worried that this work backlog might impact the future operations of uranium recovery facilities in Garfield County. I want you to know that the NRC recognizes the Garfield County interest, and am pleased to inform you that the NRC staff has developed an action plan to help eliminate the uranium recovery work backlog.

Industry presentations made at a March 1996 NRC/National Mining Association Workshop and discussions with individual licensees have made it clear that the amount of work in the uranium recovery area will be increasing over the next several years. This increase in work comes at a time when the staff must also support the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) in meeting its statutory obligations to complete reclamation of abandoned uranium mill tailings piles by September 1998, the extended program date presently under consideration by Congress. In addition, the staff needs to complete the work necessary to ensure timely reclamation of sites and to respond to the needs of licensees with operating facilities. Unfortunately, many of the staff activities to review the DOE program and licensee submittals rely on the same type of technical experts to do the work. This situation has resulted in the current backlog of work facing the NRC staff.

However, in order to address this problem, the NRC has realigned resources to provide a major increase in staff and contractor support to help eliminate the uranium recovery work backlog. This increase should help NRC improve the timeliness of uranium recovery licensing actions while continuing to maintain adequate protection of public health and safety. We expect to concentrate on supporting the licensing of new facilities, the resumption of operation for existing facilities, the renewal of licenses for existing facilities, and the completion of groundwater and surface reclamation reviews for non-operating mills. Also, NRC believes that it will be able to support the statutorily mandated schedule for DOE to complete its work at abandoned uranium mills while ensuring that commercial operation and reclamations at licensed facilities receive the attention needed.

In addition to these actions on NRC's part, as was indicated in the March 1996 workshop, there are actions that the industry can take to assist the staff in completing its work in a more timely manner. For example, the submittal of complete and high-quality applications for licensing actions will reduce the likelihood of additional requests for information. The prompt submittal of

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information to NRC can result in a more timely review in cases where either the applicant has requested NRC to conduct a review on a very tight schedule, or NRC determines that additional information is needed before a final licensing action can be taken. Finally, the industry can assist the staff by identifying priorities for specific sites, thereby allowing NRC staff to place greater emphasis on licensing actions considered more critical by the licensee or applicant. The NRC has been working with licensee representatives to help ensure these steps are implemented and, thus, improve the efficiency of the staff review.

I believe the actions taken by NRC to improve the efficiency of the uranium recovery program, coupled with the increase in additional resources, should both help eliminate the current work backlog and ensure timely reviews in the future. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact either me or Mr. Joseph Holonich, Chief of the Uranium Recovery Branch. I can be reached at (301) 415-7800, and Mr. Holonich can be reached at (301) 415-7238.

Sincerely,

Original signed by Carl J. Paperiello

Carl J. Paperiello, Director
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

cc: The Honorable Orrin G. Hatch
The Honorable Robert F. Bennett
The Honorable Bill Orton
The Honorable James V. Hansen
The Honorable Michael Leavitt
Mr. Ruland J. Gill, School and
Institutional Trust Lands
Mr. Ted Stewart, State Department
of Natural Resources

DOCUMENT NAME: S:\DWM\URB\JJH\GARFIELD.JJH

EDO GT96437 SECY CRC-96-0624

*see previous concurrence

CP/PROOFED/JUNE 24, 1996

OFC	URB*		DWM*		NMSS		NMSS		EDS	
NAME	JHolonich		MFederline		JGreeves		CPaperiello		HTompson	
DATE	6/20/96		6/21/96		6/ /96		6/15/96		6/21/96	
OFC	EDO		OCM							
NAME	JTaylor		SJackson *							
DATE	6/24/96		07/09/96							

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*Concurs w/minor edits.

DISTRIBUTION FOR LETTER TO County Commissioners Garfield County, Utah
DATED July 9, 1996

DISTRIBUTION: EDO TICKET GT96437

SECY CRC-96-0624

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LHowell RIV

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DMorris

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ACTION

EDO Principal Correspondence Control

FROM:

DUE: 06/28/96

EDO CONTROL: GT96437

DOC DT: 06/10/96

FINAL REPLY:

6/21/96

Louise Liston
D. Maloy Dodds
Clare M. Ramsay
Garfield County (Utah) Commissioners

TO:

Chairman Jackson

FOR SIGNATURE OF :

** PRI **

CRC NO: 96-0624

Paperiello

DESC:

REQUEST TIMELY REVIEW OF SUBMITTALS FROM URANIUM OPERATORS

ROUTING:

Taylor
Milhoan
Thompson
Blaha

→ Holmich

DATE: 06/17/96

ASSIGNED TO:

CONTACT:

NMSS

Paperiello

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS OR REMARKS:

Chairman's Office to review response prior to dispatch. Put EDO and Chairman on for concurrence.

cc: Fealuchi
Weber
Bell

DWM Action	
Due to NMSS Director's Office	
By	6/25/96
	rec'd 6/18/96

ACTION: Holmich

Due to DWM

Director's Office:

6/24/96

6/19

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
CORRESPONDENCE CONTROL TICKET

PAPER NUMBER: CRC-96-0624 LOGGING DATE: Jun 13 96
ACTION OFFICE: EDO
AUTHOR: L LISTON, D DODDS, C RAMS
AFFILIATION: UTAH
ADDRESSEE: CHAIRMAN JACKSON
LETTER DATE: Jun 10 96 FILE CODE: MHS-11
SUBJECT: URANIUM OPERATION REVIEWS
ACTION: Direct Reply
DISTRIBUTION: CHAIRMAN, RF
SPECIAL HANDLING: SECY TO ACK
CONSTITUENT:
NOTES: *Chairman To See response prior to Disposal*
DATE DUE: ~~Jun 27 96~~
SIGNATURE: *July 1* DATE SIGNED:
AFFILIATION: