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Docket No. WM-63

W. John Arthur, III, Project Manager  
Uranium Mill Tailings Project Office  
U.S. Department of Energy  
Albuquerque Operations Office  
P.O. Box 5400  
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87115

Dear Mr. Arthur:

This letter is in regard to the status of our review of the Lakeview UMTRA Project. We are concerned that a number of important issues remain to be resolved, and construction will be resuming at the site in the near future. Since these issues will directly impact the construction activities that will most likely occur this summer, we believe that it is imperative that we make every effort to resolve them as soon as possible. You should note that if construction commences prior to resolution, it will be without NRC's concurrence as required by Title I of the Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act of 1978.

The first item of concern is the lack of design data for the radon barrier. In our June 9, 1986 conditional concurrence, we identified the final design of the radon barrier as an outstanding item that still needed review and concurrence by NRC. We specifically noted that placement of radon barrier should not proceed prior to our concurrence in the design. Our records show that we have notified your office numerous times (letters dated April 27, and July 20, 1987, telephone communication with DOE November 5, 1987 and a meeting at our office on August 28, 1987, etc.) that no radon barrier design has been submitted for NRC concurrence. Although a portion of the radon barrier was placed last fall, contrary to our conditional concurrence, DOE was informed that in all likelihood it would have to be removed this spring. Without approval of the radon barrier design, any further cover placement will be without our concurrence.

The second item is the drain that was installed to cut off observed seepage into tailings pile. This drain was installed without NRC concurrence. Ever since the seepage was first identified we have requested information necessary to determine if the drain will intercept and divert the seepage away from the pile and to establish if the drain

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will meet the design life of 1000 years to the extent reasonably achievable. At this time, we have still not received all the information needed to enable us to complete our review and independent evaluation, and therefore we are unable to conclude that the drain will meet the requirements.

In addition, our June 9 letter identified ground-water strategy and cleanup as an outstanding item that needed review and concurrence by NRC. DOE has yet to address ground water (infiltration and contamination) at the disposal site and the restoration of contaminated ground water existing at the processing site. Please note that the first two issues (the radon barrier and the seepage drain) are directly related to your ability to demonstrate compliance with the proposed EPA ground-water protection standards.

We have several concerns over the way that revisions to the plan and specifications have been handled. While we recognize that all revisions may not require NRC concurrence, we need to have copies for completeness. For example, Revisions 3, 4, and 5 to the specifications were not submitted to NRC. In a related instance, the Lakeview RAIP does not contain specifications on Plasticity Index, although the generic RAIP does. We were informed that the RAC had deleted the PI from the Lakeview RAIP because it was covered in the specifications. Our records of revisions to the specifications are incomplete and we are unable to confirm whether or not there is a PI applicable to the Lakeview radon cover design.

There is a general problem of changes being made in drawings and specifications without documenting the change as a "revision", thereby creating confusion as to whether review documents and construction documents are the same.

Should you have any questions, please call me at FTS 776-2805 or the project manager, Tom Olsen at FTS 776-2813.

Sincerely,

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R. Dale Smith, Director  
Uranium Recovery Field Office  
Region IV

cc: D. Munn, DOE  
F. Miera, OR

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