



ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

Office of the Director

BRUCE BABBITT, Governor

JAMES E. SARN, M.D., M.P.H., Director

May 16, 1983

CHARLES NYLANDER
RESPONDING
FIR NPDES
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RECEIVED ASSIST
WHORE
MAY 20 1983 APPROPRIATE
EID Dir's Office 524/5

Mr. Mark Satterwhite
Permits Branch (6W-PS)
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
First International Building
1201 Elm Street
Dallas, Texas 75270

Dear Mr. Satterwhite:

The purpose of this letter is to transmit comments regarding the proposed renewal of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit, Number NM0028550, which covers discharges to the Rio Puerco watershed from United Nuclear Corporation's Old Church Rock Mine. We request that EPA Region VI convene a public hearing to allow the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) the opportunity to present its concerns regarding permit renewal.

ADHS wishes to raise the following issues during the public hearing:

1. The United Nuclear Corporation's discharge at its Old Church Rock facility has violated the conditions of its NPDES permit on numerous occasions. Six letters have been sent to United Nuclear from EPA Region VI notifying them of NPDES violations.
2. The Rio Puerco is an interstate system that flows seventy miles across northeastern Arizona. Levels of Radium-226 contained in the Old Church Rock discharge often exceed Arizona surface water quality standards for this element. Levels of Radium-226 allowed in this and other NPDES permits covering uranium mining and milling operations in the Rio Puerco drainage also exceed Arizona standards.
3. A recent New Mexico Environmental Improvement Division (NMEID) report implicates permitted discharges such as the one in question as causative factors in maintaining potentially hazardous levels of radioactivity in the Rio Puerco.

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The Department of Health Services is an Equal Opportunity Affirmative Action Employer. All qualified men and women, including the handicapped, are encouraged to participate.

Mark Satterwhite

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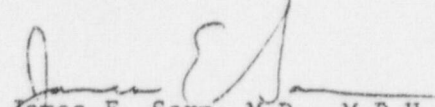
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4. Rio Puerco water, including that discharged from the Old Church Rock facility, recharges shallow aquifers in Arizona that are in turn used for public and private drinking water supplies and livestock watering. ADHS is concerned about the potential effects of continued discharge on downstream groundwater users.

We suggest EPA schedule the hearing at a time and place convenient to Arizona residents living near the Rio Puerco. ADHS staff request that the hearing date be set no earlier than July 1, 1983 to allow adequate time to prepare a hearing presentation regarding ADHS concerns in this matter.

Please notify us of your decision regarding the public hearing as soon as possible. If you have questions concerning this request, please call Mr. Jack Bale at (602) 255-1180.

Sincerely,


James E. Sarn, M.D., M.P.H.
Director

JES:AAA:md

cc: Dick Whittington
Regional Administrator
EPA Region VI

Russell Rhoades, M.P.H. ✓
Director NMEID