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Lieutenant Governor

## NEW MEXICO ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

Ground Water Quality Bureau

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**James C. Kenney**  
Cabinet Secretary

**Jennifer J. Pruett**  
Deputy Secretary

### ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

December 9, 2020

Brad Bingham, Facilities Manager  
Homestake Mining Company of California  
P.O. Box 98, Hwy 605  
Grants, New Mexico 87020

### **RE: Approval of Corrective Action Report, DP-200, Unauthorized Discharge from Off-site Well, Homestake Mining Company**

Dear Mr. Bingham:

On September 1, 2020, the Mining Environmental Compliance Section (MECS) of the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) received oral notification of an unauthorized release of extraction water from the off-site collection pipeline through Well 940 at the Homestake Mining Company (HMC) uranium mill site. The release was discovered by HMC on September 1, 2020. Oral notification was provided to NMED within 24 hours of discovery as required in Paragraph (1) of Subsection A of the 20.6.2.1203 NMAC. A 7-Day notification letter was received by NMED on September 8, 2020. HMC submitted a 15-Day Corrective Action Report (CAR) on September 16, 2020. NMED sent a Request for Additional Information (RAI) to HMC on October 10, 2020 which included a requirement to update the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) specific to the zeolite operation and a work plan to conduct additional soil characterization and received a response from HMC dated November 12, 2020. The written information submitted by the permittee fulfills the reporting timeframes of Subsection A of 20.6.2.1203 NMAC of the Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC) Regulations (20.6.2 NMAC).

NMED hereby approves the Corrective Action Report (CAR) in accordance with Paragraph (7) of Subsection A of 20.6.2.1203 NMAC and the NMED Delegation Order dated September 14, 2020,

through which the Cabinet Secretary has delegated this authority to the Director of the Water Protection Division and Chief of the Ground Water Quality Bureau. NMED's approval of the CAR is based on the following proposed actions outlined below.

### **Description of Unauthorized Discharge and Immediate Corrective Action Taken**

On August 26, 2020, HMC began operation of the zeolite treatment system after it being out of operation since November 2019. Impacted groundwater from off-site wells was pumped to the zeolite water treatment plant through the off-site collection pipeline. On September 1, 2020, an HMC technician discovered that inactive Well 490 was discharging extraction water to the ground surface and water was ponding on the property. The property where Well 490 is located is owned by HMC. The technician turned off the collection system upon discovery of the release. HMC's investigation showed that a check valve had failed and that the discharge valve was in the wrong position allowing water to backflow from the active pipeline and out the sample port valve which is left open in cold weather to prevent wellhead damage from freezing. Approximately 216,000 gallons of extraction water was released onto the ground surface. The CAR indicates HMC performed an incident investigation to identify additional corrective actions to prevent this type of incident in the future. These additional corrective actions include updating standard operating procedures specific to the zeolite water treatment operation and additional personnel training.

In lieu of submitting a soil characterization work plan for approval to NMED in response to the RFAI, HMC provided results from a soil sampling program HMC had initiated as part of their corrective action. HMC presented the soil sampling results to NMED during a teleconference held on November 2, 2020 and provided a formal submittal of the soil sampling results and updated SOP in a letter to NMED dated November 12, 2020. The total U-nat concentration in the soil samples collected are well below the EPA's 16 mg/kg Regional Screening Level for uranium in residential soils based on toxicological health considerations and are within the range of background concentrations previously exhibited in soil samples collected from HMC properties in the area.

NMED may require additional corrective actions if information becomes available indicating that the corrective actions proposed or taken are inadequate and/or groundwater contamination occurs as a result of the described discharge. NMED approval of the CAR does not relieve the permittee of its responsibility to comply with any other applicable federal, state and/or local laws and regulations. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) will be providing independent review of the SOP to evaluate compliance with NRC requirements.

Please contact Ashlynn Winton of MECS at (505) 660-8926 or [ashlynn.winton@state.nm.us](mailto:ashlynn.winton@state.nm.us) with any questions.

Brad Bingham  
December 9, 2020  
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Sincerely,

Rebecca Roose  
Director, Water Protection Division

RR:AW

cc: Ron Linton, NRC (signed copy: [ron.linton@nrc.gov](mailto:ron.linton@nrc.gov))  
Mark Purcell, EPA (signed copy: [Purcell.mark@epa.gov](mailto:Purcell.mark@epa.gov))  
Kurt Vollbrecht, MECS Program Manager (signed copy: [kurt.vollbrecht@state.nm.us](mailto:kurt.vollbrecht@state.nm.us))  
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