



Homestake Mining Company of California
P.O. Box 98
Grants, NM 87020

Tel +1 505-287-4456
Fax +1 505-287-4457

May 20, 2021

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
ATTN: Document Control Desk
Washington, DC 20555-0001

Regional Administrator
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Region IV
1600 East Lamar Boulevard
Arlington, TX 76011-45-4511

**RE: Reply to Notice of Violation
 NRC Inspection Report 040-08903/2021-001
 Docket 040-08903, License SUA-1471
 Homestake Mining Company, Grants Reclamation Project**

Dear Regional Administrator:

Pursuant to the letter from the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), dated April 20, 2021, titled *NRC Inspection Report 040-08903/2021-001 and Notice of Violation*, Homestake Mining Company of California (HMC) has prepared responses to the Notice of Violation (NOV) cited by the NRC as shown below in italics, followed by HMC's responses.

1. *The reason for the violation, or, if contested, the basis for disputing the violation or severity level.*

As noted in inspection report 040-08903/2021-001, conflicting language regarding the management of purge water had inadvertently been left in version 5 of Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) 17 – Groundwater Monitoring. During the inspection, this issue had been identified by HMC staff in 2020 and draft version 6 of SOP 17 was shared with NRC during the February 2021 inspection.

2. *The corrective steps that have been taken and the results achieved.*

- a. HMC hired an outside consulting company, Environmental Standards, to perform sampling training and a review of SOP 17.
 - i. An online training course was completed the week of December 28, 2020; this training included pre-sample preparations, measurement of field parameters, the use of low stress sampling, dedicated pumps, and a pump truck, and decontamination procedures. During the online training, the management of groundwater sampling purge water was discussed.
 - ii. The field training course was completed the week of March 8, 2021. This training course incorporated the information reviewed during the online training.

- iii. At the time of the field training, SOP 17 was updated based on review by Environmental Standards and information gathered during the field portion of the training. Included in the update of SOP 17 is the procedure to collect and dispose of impacted purge water during groundwater sampling activities.

3. The corrective steps that will be taken.

All steps have been taken to address the collection and disposal of sampling purge water. HMC will continue to conduct annual reviews of SOP 17 to ensure that it is properly followed and updated as needed.

4. The date when full compliance will be achieved.

HMC contends that it has always been in full compliance Materials License SUA-1471, Amendment 56, License Condition 23 since an SOP had been established in association with groundwater monitoring. All SOPs are reviewed and are updated as needed. HMC demonstrated the effectiveness of this process when the conflicting language in SOP 17 had been identified and actions were underway to train employees and update the SOP at the time of the inspection.

HMC's understanding of the NOV is that the primary issue at hand was inconsistency in Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) 17 – Groundwater Monitoring Revision 5 in relation to the handling of 11.e(2) byproduct material, in the form of groundwater monitoring purge water, as specified in License SUA-1471 and NRC regulations. While HMC is not contesting this NOV, it does not appear that 11.e(2) byproduct material in the form of purge water is consistently regulated as an unauthorized release per NRC regulations across the UMTRCA portfolio, as other licensees under the regulatory oversight of NRC are permitted to discharge purge water to ground surface when it is listed in their SOPs or equivalent, similar to HMC SOP 17 - Revision 5 above.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this matter, please contact me via e-mail at bbingham@homestakeminingcoca.com or via phone at 505-290-8019.

Respectfully,



Brad R. Bingham
Closure Manager
Homestake Mining Company of California
Office: 505.287.4456 x35 | Cell: 505.290.8019

BB/jlo

ec: R Linton, NRC, Rockville Pike, Maryland
M Poston, Region IV NRC, Arlington, Texas
A Winton, NMED, Santa Fe, New Mexico
B Tsosie, DOE, Grand Junction, Colorado
M Purcell, Region VI EPA, Dallas, Texas
D Lattin Barrick, Elko, Nevada
M McCarthy, Barrick, Elko, Nevada