

August 8, 2000

Ms. Donna Bergman-Tabbert, Manager
U.S. Department of Energy
Grand Junction Office
2597 B3/4 Road
Grand Junction, CO 81503

SUBJECT: REQUEST TO DISPOSE POLYCHLORINATED BIPHENYL (PCB)/RADIOACTIVE
WASTE AT CHENEY DISPOSAL CELL

Dear Ms. Bergman-Tabbert:

By letter dated June 1, 2000, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) requested the concurrence of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) in the DOE's planned disposal of 29 cubic yards of PCB/radioactive bulk product waste and PCB/radioactive remediation waste at the Grand Junction (Cheney site), Colorado, Disposal Cell. These wastes were generated at the DOE-Grand Junction Office Facility and vicinity properties in the Grand Junction area as part of DOE's responsibilities under Title I of the Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act of 1978 (UMTRCA), as amended. As you are aware, UMTRCA requires that NRC concur in DOE's remedial actions at abandoned mill tailings facilities and associated vicinity properties in the Grand Junction area, including DOE's plans for disposal of radioactive wastes resulting from remediation activities.

The NRC staff has completed its review of DOE's plans for disposal of the aforementioned 29 cubic yards of PCB/ radioactive waste at the Cheney Disposal Cell. In a prior review, the staff concurred in the DOE Remedial Action Plan for the Grand Junction processing site, including the design for the Cheney Disposal Cell, in July 1994. In May 1998, the staff also concurred in DOE's actions to place in excess of 4 million cubic yards of uranium mill tailings and vicinity property materials in the Cheney Disposal Cell. As such, the disposal of the radioactive component of the 29 cubic yards of PCB/radioactive waste represents an insignificant addition to the existing 4 million plus cubic yards of similar radioactive material in the Cheney Disposal Cell and, accordingly, is not a concern.

The primary concern with the proposed disposal of the 29 cubic yards of PCB/radioactive waste is with the hazardous component of the waste (PCBs), not the radioactive component. However, in this regard, as noted in the June 1, 2000, DOE letter, the proposed disposal of the PCB/radioactive waste in the Cheney Disposal Cell was recently approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA concluded that the proposed disposal action would not pose an unreasonable risk of injury to health or to the environment from the PCBs. Based on these findings regarding both the radioactive and hazardous components of the waste material, the NRC staff concurs in DOE's plans to dispose of the 29 cubic yards of PCB/radioactive waste in the Cheney Disposal Cell.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Rick Weller, the Project Manager for the Grand Junction site, at (301) 415-7287 or by e-mail to RMW2@nrc.gov.

D. Tabbert

August 8, 2000

In accordance with 10 CFR 2.790 of the NRC's "Rules of Practice," a copy of this letter will be available electronically for public inspection in the NRC Public Document Room or from the Publicly Available Records (PARS) component of NRC's document system (ADAMS). ADAMS is accessible from the NRC Web site at <http://www.nrc.gov/NRC/ADAMS/index.html> (the Public Electronic Reading Room).

Sincerely,

/RA/

Philip Ting, Chief
Fuel Cycle Licensing Branch
Division of Fuel Cycle Safety and Safeguards
Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards

cc: L. Woodworth, DOE Alb
F. Bosiljevac, DOE Alb
E. Artiglia, TAC Alb
K. Johnson, TAC Alb
J. Elmer, MACTEC GRJ
J. Deckler, CDPHE Den

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