

July 27, 2000

MEMORANDUM TO: Philip Ting, Chief
Fuel Cycle Licensing Branch
FCSS/NMSS

FROM: Kenneth R. Hooks, Senior Project Manager **/RA/**
Uranium Recovery Section
Fuel Cycle Licensing Branch,
FCSS/NMSS

SUBJECT: OBSERVATION OF U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY ANNUAL
INSPECTIONS OF TITLE I URANIUM MILL TAILINGS SITES

Attached for your information is a summary of my observations of the annual inspections by representatives of the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE's) Grand Junction Office of two Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act (UMTRCA) Title I disposal sites. The inspections were performed at the Shiprock, New Mexico site on June 13, 2000, and the Durango, Colorado site on June 14, 2000.

The UMTRCA Title I sites were reclaimed by the DOE, and are licensed by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission under Title 10 Code of Federal Regulations Part 40.27. The requirements for the long-term surveillance and maintenance of the sites, including the annual inspections, are specified in DOE's Long-Term Surveillance Plan (LTSP) for each site.

The inspections were performed in a competent and professional matter, and all checklist items were reviewed by the inspectors. At both sites, the tailings piles were in good condition, with little or no degradation since the June 1999 inspections. Perimeter signs, site markers and other site features were generally in good condition, and growth of deep-rooted weeds on the piles did not appear to be excessive. No items were identified at either site which required immediate corrective action.

Contact: Kenneth R. Hooks, NMSS/FCSS/FCLB
(301) 415-7777

Attachment: Summary of Inspection Observations

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OBSERVATION OF U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
INSPECTIONS OF TITLE I URANIUM MILL TAILINGS SITES
JUNE 13 & 14, 2000

During June 13 & 14, 2000, a member of the Uranium Recovery Section, Fuel Cycle Licensing Branch, observed the annual inspections of the Shiprock, New Mexico, and Durango, Colorado, Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act (UMTRCA) Title I disposal sites. The inspections were performed by representatives of the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE's) Grand Junction, Colorado, office. The inspectors used inspection checklists, based on the checklists in the DOE's Long-Term Surveillance Plan (LTSP) for each site, as modified due to the results of previous inspections.

The DOE inspection team was comprised of the following personnel:

Mark Plessinger Team Leader at Shiprock, Inspector at Durango

Mike Widdop Team Leader at Durango, Inspector at Shiprock

BACKGROUND

Surface reclamation has been completed by DOE at both sites, and the sites are now licensed by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission under Title 10 Code of Federal Regulations Part 40.27. The requirements for the long-term surveillance and maintenance of the sites, including the annual inspections, are specified in the LTSP for each site.

INSPECTION RESULTS

Shiprock

The Shiprock site, which is located adjacent to the Navajo Engineering and Construction Authority property in Shiprock, New Mexico, was inspected on June 13, 2000. The inspectors were accompanied by Michele Dineyazhe, an environmental specialist with the Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources. The inspectors walked the tailings impoundment or pile, checking for weed growth and degradation of the riprap. They checked the condition of the fence, gates, signage, site markers, air monitors and wells per the inspection checklist. Although the LTSP does not require monitoring of groundwater, characterization of the groundwater and contaminant plume(s) from the pile was begun by DOE in 1998. The LTSP will be amended after the necessary groundwater corrective actions are determined. The inspectors looked at several seepage areas at the edge of the bluff overlooking the flood plain between the pile and the San Juan River, and seepage in Many Devils Wash. The various seepage points have been recently fenced to restrict access. Two crews were performing groundwater sampling on June 13, 2000.

Durango

The disposal site near Durango, Colorado, is in Bodo Canyon. The mill tailings were relocated from the mill site overlooking the Animas River to Bodo Canyon. The pile is not fenced, but is posted. The access road is closed by a locked gate. Some damage to the entry signs was noticed. The inspectors checked the condition of the gate, signage, site markers and wells per the inspection checklist. Construction water (added for dust control during the relocation of the

pile) seeping from the pile is captured in a lined holding pond, and the water is treated before release to meet Colorado discharge permit requirements. Some silting was observed in the drainage channels, but it did not appear sufficient to restrict flow. Erosion at the mouth of the drainage ditch at the northeast corner of the disposal cell does not appear to be significantly greater than in June 1999.

At both sites, the tailings piles were in good condition, with little or no degradation since the June 1999 inspections. Perimeter signs, site markers and other site features were generally in good condition, and weed growth on the piles did not appear to be excessive. The precise location of survey markers was determined, to the extent possible, with a portable Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) system. Some markers could not be located by the GPS, possibly due to sunspot activity during the inspection period.

The inspectors had both performed similar inspections at these, or other Title I sites. They were knowledgeable about the history of both sites, and had noted items to check based on results of the June 1999 inspections and various site visits. No items were identified at either site which required immediate corrective action. The inspectors performed the inspection activities in a competent and professional manner, and all checklist items were addressed.

The DOE inspection reports for these sites will be included in the 2000 Annual Site Inspection and Monitoring Report for Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act Title I Disposal Sites.