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REGULATORY OPERATIONS  
IV



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SCHOOL OF MINES AND METALLURGY  
MINING, PETROLEUM AND GEOLOGICAL ENGINEERING

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March 28, 1973



Mr. J. E. Rothfleisch  
Materials Branch  
Directorate of Licensing  
U. S. Atomic Energy Commission  
Washington, D. C. 20545

Dear Mr. Rothfleisch:

I have examined the additional material concerning the Kerr McGee environmental impact statement that you supplied to me March 14 and considered the comments that you made during a telephone conversation on March 27.

In the review that I supplied to you on October 4, I observed that nitrate and radioactivity concentrations in the wells used for monitoring the waste ponds were significantly higher than the concentrations of these chemicals in the background wells, and I therefore concluded that the water from the wells was contaminated. At this time, I have not been given any documented information that would prove otherwise.

In your telephone conversation, you stated that the difference in the level of radioactivity between the background wells and the monitoring wells could be explained by the fact that the wells are in different strata. Perhaps this is true, but no evidence has been supplied to me to support this contention. In the absence of other evidence, I must also conclude that the high nitrate levels shown for monitor wells 1, 2, and 5 is a result of contamination. Kerr McGee acknowledges that well 1 is probably contaminated, but the company does not explain the high nitrate values from wells 2 and 5, as far as I can determine.

It was not my contention that the apparent level of contamination of water samples from the monitor wells was sufficient to be cause for great alarm. My point was that it seemed to show that leakage from the ponds has occurred. Perhaps it has not and the water quality variations can be explained in other ways. I am sure that you appreciate that I am in no position to make that determination when the alternative explanations are based on circumstances and situations of which I have no knowledge.

Sincerely yours,

*Don L. Warner*

Don L. Warner, Professor  
of Geological Engineering

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