

Kennecott Corporation
150 East Social Hall Avenue
Suite 400
Salt Lake City, Utah 84111
(801) 322-7000

September 13, 1996

Katherine Everett
Groundwater Quality Bureau
New Mexico Environment Department
P.O. Box 26110
Santa Fe, NM 87502

Kennecott

**Subject: Sohio Western Mining Co.
 L-Bar Uranium Facility
 DP-150**

40-8904

Dear Ms. Everett:

This is in response to your letter dated August 18, 1996, in which you requested additional information regarding nitrate, sulfate, and total dissolved solids (TDS), and participation by your office in the next sampling round.

Your acknowledgement of the priority given to resolution of any issues associated with the groundwater discharge plan is appreciated, and be assured that Sohio Western is proceeding diligently towards completing the requirements for final closure and long-term maintenance of the L-Bar Site, as specified by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission and Department of Energy, respectively.

The next sampling round for L-Bar is scheduled for the week of October 14, and you are welcome to join us and split samples. You may contact Tom Osborn, INTERA, at (512) 346-2000 to make the final arrangements.

In your letter you made several references to a determination of "background" for the L-Bar site. The background well for L-Bar was established at MW-29A. The background well, compliance wells, monitor wells, sampling frequency, and sampling parameters were all agreed upon at a joint meeting held at NMED in February 1989 between Sohio, NRC, NMED-Groundwater, and INTERA. MW-29A is not only the background well regulated by the NRC license, but it was chosen as a result of an extensive technical review by the four parties. In response to your specific reference to background for sulfate, the concentrations recorded at MW-29-A have been in the 3,000 to 4,000 mg/l range.

You have requested a characterization of nitrate occurrence at the site, with a sampling during this next round of nitrate as nitrogen (NO₃ as N). We agree to add nitrate analyses to the sampling of all wells in the October 14 period. We have sampled nitrate in several wells, and in MW-17B and MW-50 concentrations of 470 and 340 mg/l respectively were recorded. None of

9609260174 960913
PDR ADOCK 04008904
C PDR

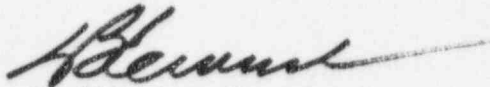
ADD: N. HALL
ADD: Bob Shewmaker T229

the surrounding wells had significant levels of nitrate.

Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) is not a required parameter for sampling in any license or permit, and, consequently, has not been a normal parameter. We have, however, sampled wells on occasion for TDS, and would note that at MW-29A, background, TDS has been recorded at 5,650 mg/l, and other wells have tested in a range of 3,000 to 8,000 mg/l, well above the 1,000 mg/l you referenced. We agree to include TDS in the October sampling.

Please call me at (801) 322-7280 if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "D. Crouch", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David B. Crouch
Director Environmental Quality
On behalf of Sohio Western Mining Co.

cc: Charlotte Abrams, NRC
Linda McLean, NRC Reg. IV
Tom Osborn, INTERA