

Mr. Roy Cellan
Homestake Mining Company
P.O. Box 98
Grants, New Mexico 87020

May 9, 1997

SUBJECT: EXTENSION OF RECLAMATION MILESTONES, AMENDMENT 25 TO SOURCE
MATERIAL LICENSE SUA-1471

Dear Mr. Cellan:

The U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has completed its review of the Homestake Mining Company (HMC) request to extend reclamation milestones as submitted in HMC's letter dated December 18, 1996. The staff has determined that the proposed extensions are acceptable, as discussed in the enclosed Technical Evaluation Report (Enclosure 1).

Therefore, pursuant to Title 10 of the Code of Federal Regulations (10 CFR), Part 40, Source Material License SUA-1471 is hereby amended by modifying License Condition No. 36. All other conditions of this license shall remain the same. The license is being reissued to incorporate the above modifications (Enclosure 2).

An environmental report is not required from HMC since the amendment does not meet the criteria of 10 CFR 51.60(b)(2). An NRC staff environmental assessment was not performed, since this action is categorically excluded under 10 CFR 51.22(c)(11).

If you have any questions regarding this letter or the enclosures, please contact the NRC Project Manager for the HMC site, Ken Hooks, at (301) 415-7777.

Sincerely,

(Original signed by)

Joseph J. Holonich, Chief
Uranium Recovery Branch
Division of Waste Management
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

Docket No. 40-8903
License No. SUA-1471
Amendment No. 25
Case closed: L51491

Enclosures: As stated
cc: GBonnano, EPA
JVirgona, DOEGJPO
ROhrbom, NMED

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TECHNICAL EVALUATION REPORT

DATE: April 29, 1997

DOCKET No.: 40 - 8903, License No. 1471

LICENSEE: Homestake Mining Company (HMC)

FACILITY: Grants Uranium Mill and Tailings Site

PROJECT MANAGER: Ken Hooks

TECHNICAL REVIEWER: Ken Hooks

Summary and Conclusions:

HMC requested by letter dated December 18, 1996, an extension to the reclamation milestones for placement of the final radon barrier and erosion protection on both the Large Tailings Pile (LTP) and the Small Tailings Pile (STP) due to reasons of technical infeasibility. The NRC staff has determined that the extensions are justified since compliance with the dates is not technologically feasible, as discussed in HMC's letter, and that License Condition (LC) No. 36 should be modified as requested. However, regardless of the extension, HMC shall perform reclamation as expeditiously as possible.

Description of Licensee's Amendment Request

HMC's letter of December 18, 1996, requested extension of reclamation milestone dates listed in LC 36 as follows:

1. Placement of the final radon barrier on the LTP from December 31, 1996, to December 31, 2003.
2. Placement of the final radon barrier on the STP from December 31, 2001, to December 31, 2012.
3. Placement of erosion protection on the LTP from September 30, 1999, to September 30, 2004.
4. Placement of erosion protection on the STP from July 1, 2004, to September 30, 2013.

The bases for the extension requests are incomplete settlement (less than 90%) for the LTP and the existence of evaporation ponds on the STP which are required for the approved groundwater corrective action program, estimated to be completed in 2010.

Technical Evaluation:

The average radon fluxes measured by HMC in 1995 were 17 pCi/m² sec for the LTP and 10.3 pCi/m² sec for the STP, both below the EPA standard and 10 CFR 40 Appendix A limit of 20 pCi/m² sec. License SUA-1471, LC 37.F requires that the final radon barrier shall not be placed on the LTP until settlement has reached 90% of expected, and LC 35 approved use of the evaporation ponds on the STP. The NRC staff does not consider that reducing the

settlement requirement is appropriate since future settlement could be significant, and could cause cracking of the completed radon barrier. Relocation of the evaporation ponds is not appropriate, since it would raise the possibility of contamination of other site areas during construction of new ponds. Since the radon flux from both piles presently meets applicable standards, and any increased risk to public health and safety or the environment incurred by extending the reclamation dates is minimal, the staff concludes that the requested extension is acceptable.

Recommended License Change:

The NRC staff recommends that the dates in LC 36 be revised as requested and described above.

Environmental Impact Evaluation:

An environmental report from HMC is not required by 10 CFR 51.60(b)(2), since this amendment will not authorize or result in (i) a significant expansion of a site, (ii) a significant change in the types of effluents, (iii) a significant increase in the amount of effluents, (iv) a significant increase in individual or cumulative occupational radiation exposures, or (v) a significant increase in the potential for or consequences from radiological accidents. An NRC staff environmental assessment was not performed, since this action is categorically excluded under 10 CFR 51.22(c)(11), as (i) there is no significant change in the types or significant increase in the amounts of any effluents that may be released offsite, (ii) there is no significant increase in individual or cumulative occupational radiation exposure, (iii) there is no significant construction impact, and (iv) there is no significant increase in the potential for or consequences from radiological accidents.