

Mr. Joseph E. Virgona, Project Manager
U.S. Department of Energy
Grand Junction Project Office
P.O. Box 2567
Grand Junction, Colorado 81502-2567

May 9, 1997

SUBJECT: 1996 INSPECTIONS OF TUBA CITY AND SHIPROCK TITLE I SITES

Dear Mr. Virgona:

The NRC staff has reviewed the 1996 annual inspection reports for the Tuba City, Arizona and Shiprock, New Mexico Title I sites. Based on these reviews, we conclude that the inspections and remedial measures that are being performed are acceptable at both sites.

At the Shiprock site, staff notes that DOE is implementing an extensive spraying program to control vegetation. Staff also notes that this spraying program is being used in the ditches and drainage channels. It should be pointed out that controlling vegetation in the channels may not be absolutely necessary. As noted in the inspection report, the principal reason for controlling vegetation is to reduce the potential for bio-intrusion through the radon barrier and into the cell. In the drainage channels, there is generally no radon barrier and there are no tailings that could be affected by vegetation. The most likely effect of vegetation growth in the channels is to provide further erosional stability. Up to the point where vegetation could affect channel capacity and cause overflow into areas not designed for concentrated flows, the channels are likely to be effective, even if extensive vegetation growth occurs in them.

If DOE would like to reduce the vegetation control program in the channels, staff would consider a modification to the Long Term Surveillance Plan (LTSP) to be the appropriate vehicle. When making modifications to the LTSP, it may appropriate for DOE to re-analyze the channel velocities and capacities to establish a level of vegetation growth that would require removal.

These reviews were performed by Ted Johnson. If you have any questions, he may be contacted at 415-6658.

Sincerely,

(original signed by)

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

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