



STATE OF NEW MEXICO
GOVERNOR BILL RICHARDSON



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Governor Richardson Blasts NRC Effort to Limit Public Involvement in Uranium Mine Applications

(Santa Fe, NM) – Governor Bill Richardson today petitioned the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to reconsider its plans to create a “generic environmental impact statement” (GEIS) concerning newly proposed uranium recovery operations including in-situ leach (ISL) recovery facilities and conventional mills to be located in the western United States.

The NRC has stated that the purpose of this “generic” process is “to aid in a more efficient environmental review for each separate license application.”

“There is nothing generic about the concerns that many New Mexicans have with proposals to reopen or start new uranium mining and milling operations in their communities,” said Governor Richardson. “I believe that this proposal will negatively impact the ability of New Mexico’s citizens to participate in the NRC licensing process for individual facilities.”

Under the NRC’s proposal, new mining activities — and the public’s right to comment on them — would fall under one single “generic” environmental impact statement rather than individual statements on a site by site basis. Governor Richardson’s letter included the request that the NRC issue and allow the public to review individual Environmental Impact Statements for proposed uranium mines and mills in New Mexico on a case by case basis.

“Our citizens have a right to full involvement in decisions that could have far reaching impacts on their homes and water resources,” said Governor Richardson. “Given the concerns of many citizens in New Mexico about the public health, environmental, and cultural impacts of new uranium mining actions, a process to eliminate public review of individual NRC permit actions in New Mexico would be disrespectful to our many sovereign Native American Tribes and Pueblos and the general public.”

The NRC’s GEIS proposal would also be contrary to the State of New Mexico’s public participation permitting process. In New Mexico, state discharge permit applications for uranium operations are evaluated in a case by case basis, and this individual review is

particularly important for uranium operations due to the varying hydrologic, geologic, and ecologic conditions of each particular site. Such a review allows the state and the public the opportunity to address site specific concerns unique to each individual facility.

“If uranium mining and milling are to resume in New Mexico, the state must be sure that the public is given a robust opportunity to participate in the decisions and that all environmental, water resource, and potential public health issues are thoroughly examined for each operation,” said Governor Richardson. “The State of New Mexico is committed to an open, transparent and thorough review process of all uranium permits and we implore the NRC to commit itself to the same level of public involvement.”

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