



JOINT PRESS RELEASE FROM DAKOTA RURAL ACTION AND CLEAN WATER ALLIANCE

**EXPERT: CONTAMINATION OF GROUND AND SURFACE WATER AT URANIUM MINE SITE
TO BE EXPECTED, IF MINING OCCURS**

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The Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Atomic Safety and Licensing Board (ASLB) ruled today that testimony presented by Dr. Hannan LaGarry should be made public. Dr. LaGarry's testimony covered geological information about water protection on the proposed Dewey-Burdock in situ leach uranium mine site in Custer and Fall River Counties. Azarga Uranium (formerly Powertech), which wants to do the mining, must first prove that the mining process can be contained to avoid polluting surface and ground water outside the mining area. Government agencies require that the in situ process - which involves pumping water through uranium deposits to chemically remove the uranium - must be confined to the mining area to avoid polluting clean water.

Dr. LaGarry's testimony says "there is no reasonable expectation that confinement remains in drilled areas." His research showed that there at least 7515 old drill holes on the site. (In its applications, Azarga said that there were about 4,000 holes.) This means that, if mining was allowed, contaminated mining water could easily move into what had been clean ground water. There are a number of ranches in the immediate area of the proposed mine that currently use this water for livestock and human consumption.

His testimony also says that artesian water, which presses up from underground and pumps to the surface naturally, is present on the site. This, he says, could pump mining fluids to the surface, “and poses a significant risk of unexpected, serious contamination of the Cheyenne River and its tributaries.”

Dr. LaGarry’s research also identified “numerous faults present in the licensed areas,” as well as a sinkhole, which could also allow mined water to move into clean water. Azarga has consistently said that faults and sinkholes are not present where they want to mine. Much of the information that Dr. LaGarry used to create his testimony was taken from documents that included driller’s logs. These logs included notations that information should be withheld from maps and from landowners, and some data was missing from the files viewed by Dr. LaGarry. The records also indicated that 13 of the drill holes that Dr. LaGarry looked at were plugged with wooden fenceposts, and another 6 with broken steel. Clearly, these do not provide permanent protection for the groundwater.

“This is a victory for the people’s right to know what is planned for our water,” said Gena Parkhurst, a member of Dakota Rural Action. “We have a right to full information about what this Chinese company wants to do with the water we use for agriculture and our communities.”

Dr. Liliias Jarding of Clean Water Alliance added, “Dr. LaGarry’s testimony supports what we’ve been saying all along - that this uranium company is misleading the public about the safety of its proposed mine. The water has never been returned to its original condition at an in situ uranium mine. And Dr. LaGarry’s testimony makes it clear that both surface and ground water would be damaged if mining was to happen here.”

Background: On August 6, 2014, the ASLB told the company to produce new geological information that it had acquired just after it was issued a license to mine uranium. The ASLB called the information “relevant” and said that it was subject to “mandatory disclosure.” The company objected. The Board ruled at its August 19-21, 2014, hearing that the information had to be released to Dr. LaGarry, a geologist and expert witness for the Oglala Sioux Tribe, Clean Water Alliance, and other intervenors in the ASLB process. Dr. LaGarry reviewed the information, keeping it confidential, and produced his testimony.

The intervenors asked that Dr. LaGarry’s testimony be made public, and Azarga (Powertech) again objected. Today’s ruling by the ASLB requires that the testimony be made public. Dr. LaGarry’s testimony and the NRC’s ruling are attached.

The Clean Water Alliance is a diverse collection of citizens concerned about the health, environmental, and economic impacts that proposed uranium mining projects would have on our communities, people, economy, and natural resources. Our goal is to prevent uranium mining in the Black Hills region, and to protect our valuable resources for future generations. For more information, see our website at www.bhcleanwateralliance.org or our Facebook page at Black Hills Clean Water Alliance.

Dakota Rural Action is a grassroots family agriculture and conservation group that organizes South Dakotans to protect our family farmers and ranchers, natural resources, and unique way of life. www.dakotarural.org