



November 25, 2020

STATEMENT ON EPA ISSUANCE OF WATER PERMITS
FOR THE PROPOSED DEWEY-BURDOCK URANIUM MINE

Black Hills Clean Water Alliance opposes last night's issuance of water permits for the proposed Dewey-Burdock uranium mine in Custer and Fall River Counties in the southwestern Black Hills. We oppose this late-night federal government action for two major reasons.

The first is that – with these permits -- the Environmental Protection Agency has said it's okay to allow the toxic and radioactive contamination of groundwater aquifers – aquifers that are needed in our semi-arid region. The Agency says that the risks associated with this dangerous project are "acceptable." Their word. Our question is "Acceptable to who?" To the uranium company – and apparently to the EPA. But not to the almost 700 local people who attended the EPA hearings about the permits in 2017 and handed the EPA a clear message – "No Uranium Mining in the Black Hills."

The second reason is that the EPA's review of this project is not serious or complete. Despite the time they've had to do a good job, the documents issued with the permits and the permit process appear rushed. Issues include:

- The fact that the Dewey-Burdock site is not a suitable location for an in situ leach uranium mine, which requires that underground water can be controlled to prevent leaks of contaminated water into clean water. In the Dewey-Burdock area, the rock is fractured, making leaks likely. In some places, underground water moves very quickly, increasing the likelihood that the contaminated mining water will flow into water that had been clean.
- Second, the EPA is required by law to consult with tribal governments on a range of potential issues. The EPA cut off this process before consultation occurred. Without thorough government-to-government tribal consultation, these permits are illegal.

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- And third, the EPA issued the permits before it tested the groundwater aquifer where the company wants to pump waste water into disposal wells. The water in this aquifer is safe drinking water in nearby areas. It is illegal to pump waste water into safe drinking water. The aquifer's water should have been tested before any permit was issued to insure it is protected.

This project has a long way to go and can still be stopped in a number of ways. The most important way to stop a project like this is through citizen involvement, and we encourage people to stay involved and stay aware of what is going on around this project. Follow our website at bhcleanwateralliance.org or our Facebook page – Black Hills Clean Water Alliance.

In addition, Powertech/Azarga Uranium needs 10 permits before it could begin any mining operations. So far, it has a license from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which is tied up in litigation. And it has two EPA permits, which can be appealed and, hopefully, withdrawn. So, despite over a decade of trying to start this project, the company has gotten nowhere. A poorly thought-out project that could have disastrous impacts for our water is right where it belongs – still on the drawing board. And we will continue to work with our allies to oppose it.

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