

Appearances

DONALD R. METZLER
PROGRAM MANAGER
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
2597 3/4 Road
Grand Junction, Colorado 81503

JOEL BERWICK

TOBY WRIGHT

DEBBIE PETERSON

WENDEE RYAN

VIVIAN BOWIE

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) Public Hearing held at the College of Eastern Utah, Arts and Events Center Auditorium, 639 West 100 South, Blanding, Utah, on the 27th day of January, 2005, at 6:00 o'clock p.m., before Joseph J. Rusk, Registered Professional Reporter and Notary Public at Large.

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MS. RYAN: Chris Webb.

MR. WEBB: Thank you. I am Chris Webb, C-h-r-i-s, W-e-b-b, I am City Manager for the City of Blanding and am speaking as a representative for the City of Blanding. We are a cooperating agency, and the first thing I would like to say is we appreciate the opportunity to be involved in the process, and it has been a very professional process. One thing we have learned is that there are uncertainties with the whole process of determining what to do with this site, and that the decision makers that are making decisions aren't all in Washington, that a lot of those decisions on what is included in the EIS and some of the comments that may have been determined to not be viable have not been included. So some decisions have been made already, with respect to what is in the EIS, and in general, and some of those comments and decisions that we don't totally agree with, but in general, we agree with the EIS. First, it appears as you look at the EIS that the first thing you want to try to start to do is to interpret it yourself and make decisions regarding, all right, this is the cheapest, that is the way we ought to go. Well, if that were the case then we would obviously do nothing and leave it in place and DOE would go away. And so we think that it is obvious that just because it is the cheapest, doesn't mean that is the way we ought to go. We are of the opinion that to leave the tailings capped in place does not eliminate the potential damage to the river and surrounding properties. In addition it does not stop the river's continuous move toward the contaminated pile. In our opinion leaving it in place would only be a temporary solution with little to no investment return tradeoff.

Further, as we look at the alternatives, we don't believe that there is any alternative that provides the same return on the investment that the slurry line option does in the White Mesa mill project, even if I use the alternative not the cheapest. Because aside from the economic impact to benefit the community and benefits of recycling and extracting the remaining minerals, what impact that would have is that the project would tie directly into our water shortage that has been plaguing San Juan County consistently in cycles, and those cycles every time they come around they cost the

Federal Government millions of dollars in drought mitigation over the years. I know the City over the last five years have received three and a half million dollars in just one drought cycle, in the City of Blanding itself, and that does not include farmers and others in San Juan County that are affected by this drought that would benefit. One of the things we did, which was not taken into consideration in this EIS, is requested that the investment on that slurry line be considered, and we don't believe that it was given consideration in the least amount, and that it needs to have a return on investment that is not being considered with respect to that line.

The next point I want to make is why are we proposing to create a new site when we have a tailings site that exists, why create a new tailings site? We don't need to do that. We pointed out in certain counties building a new tailings site, we don't think this makes any sense.

Again, the other thing we wanted to say is that we have been a little bit shocked and somewhat dismayed about the lack of understanding regarding the issues of public safety. We love our neighbors, we love our citizens, and we don't want anybody to get hurt. But emotions are high, there are misunderstandings that are too numerous to mention here tonight, but we have full confidence that the DOE has the ability to provide the necessary regulatory standards to ensure public safety and environmental compliance. Our education from the Utah Department of Environmental Quality, as well as our calls to the NRC, we have become educated and are somewhat comfortable as a city that the environmental -- that the processes can be handled both safely for the public, and the associated risks are minimal if nonexistent.

So along those lines, we encourage a full education program regarding the associated risks so that the public can come to the same conclusion that we have come, with the information that we have received.

Thank you.

MS. RYAN: Thank you, Chris.

Ana Frazier.

MS. FRAZIER: Can you hear me? I put my notes in my computer, so my name is Ana, A-n-a, Marie, M-a-r-i-e, Frazier, F-r-a-z-i-e-r. I am from the Navajo Nation, southwest part of the Navajo Nation, and I am here on behalf of the White Mountain Ute, and the Navajos. And the Department of Energy sponsored Draft Environmental Impact Statements to moving the uranium to the White Mesa mill from the Moab uranium mill, mill tailings will have a greater health adverse impact on the native people who live downwind, downriver and in and around Blanding. All of these people from White Mesa have been voicing their objection to the uranium waste facility at White Mesa for close to 30 years. To increase the volume of the uranium tailings at White Mesa, especially of the mill, will only increase the contamination of the groundwater, the air and create pollution. Then the air contaminants from any tailings facilities will be downwind and downstream.

People in the Four Corners area have a long history of exposure to uranium radiation causing cancer of all kinds from the uranium production since the 1930s.

Many of the uranium mines in the area are abandoned and were never reclaimed. It appears the Department of Energy and the Federal Government has not learned from the past and has no plans for the natives of the State of Utah to deal with more radiation exposure.

The native people of the area have lived here way before the white man came to this country. There are many cultural sites such as burial places, old dwellings, Anasazi ruins of which we are descendants. There are places where our ancestors fought battles. There are herbs for healing, and

downriver from the mill there are offering places throughout this area. The White Mesa mill was built over more than 200 Ute and Navajo and Anasazi ceremonial and burial sites. This is a clear violation of the Historic Sites Act, which was passed in 1935; National Historical Preservation Act in 1966; American Indians Freedom Act, 1978; and the Archaeological Preservation Act, 1979. The Ute Tribe and Navajo Tribal culture don't understand why the white folks will never understand why we preferred the mill site as sacred and want to protect the values that were passed on to us. Our ancestors learned to respect the burial places, the areas our ancestors lived and prayed. Our great, great grandparents survived the cultures and treatment under the U.S. Cavalry, and by practicing their own little prayers and following the values that were carried on today. It is a way of life. And as long as you live here, as our neighbors, we will continue to voice our standing as to the desecration of the culture and burial sites, because that is who we are.

The value of the future of our children is valuable, and we don't want anything in any form that will harm our people and our living species in this area. We have learned that through our history. The White Mesa mill is almost 30 years old, the lining of those cesspools that are located behind the facility will eventually corrode. The man-made pipe will corrode and there will be spills somewhere, and something will eventually happen and everyone will suffer from the spill to the White Mesa Utes and Navajos and those living downriver.

We also have the White Mesa Utes and Navajos that use our environment. We are opposed to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, and moving the uranium mill tailings to include White Mesa mill as one of their three on-site facilities.

And thank you.

MS. RYAN: Thank you for that. There was no one else who signed up originally to comment. Is there anyone else at this time who would like to comment? All right.

Thank you.

(Public hearing concluded at 6:50 o'clock p.m.).

REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, Joseph J. Rusk, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true transcript of the testimony given and the proceedings had.

JOSEPH J. RUSK, CSR, RPR, RMR
Registered Professional Reporter
RUSK & RUSK COURT REPORTERS
Post Office Box 3911
Grand Junction, Colorado 81502
(970)242-3074

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