

Lower Gas Hills Conventional Uranium Mine

Scoping Report

Comment Period
July 12 through September 13, 2013

Bureau of Land Management
Lander Field Office



**Lower Gas Hills Conventional Uranium Project
Proposed by Strathmore Resources (US), Ltd.
Environmental Impact Statement - Public Scoping Comments Summary**

Introduction:

The BLM received a copy of Strathmore's Permit to Mine Application and Plan of Operations on November 1, 2012 which contained the elements necessary for a Plan of Operations pursuant to 43 CFR 3809.11. After review of the Plan, the BLM determined that greater than 640 acres would be disturbed by the proposed mine which necessitated an Environmental Impact Statement be prepared to analyze environmental impacts (BLM, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Handbook H-1790-1). A revised Plan of Operations/Mine Permit Application was received on August 23, 2013. After review, this Plan of Operations was determined complete on August 26, 2013.

The Notice of Intent (NOI) to commence with an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Lower Gas Hills Conventional Uranium Project (project) was published in the Federal Register on July 12, 2013, which began the 60 day public scoping period. The public scoping ended on September 13, 2013. The NOI and other project documents are available on the project website: <http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/info/NEPA/documents/lfo/LowerGasHillsConvMine.html>.

On July 12, 2013, the BLM issued a press release to local and statewide newspapers and the Wyoming U.S. Congressional Delegation announcing the publication of the NOI and the initiation of the EIS. The press release also stated the dates, times, and places for the public scoping meetings. A subsequent press release was issued on July 24, 2013, repeating the information about the public scoping meetings.

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Public Scoping Meetings:

Two public scoping meetings were held as follows:

Meeting Location	Meeting Date and Time	Number of Attendees (Public)
Fremont County Library, Lander Branch Lander, Wyoming	August 6, 2013 4-6 p.m.	7
Fremont County Library, Riverton Branch Riverton, Wyoming	August 8, 2013 4-6 p.m.	14

Meetings were conducted in an ‘open house’ format. Personnel from the project proponent, Strathmore Resources, and their acquiring company, Energy Fuels Resources (USA) Inc., were on hand to answer technical questions from the public regarding the project, and questions about the company. BLM staff members were available to answer technical and procedural questions about the project and the process to prepare the EIS.

Informational, directional posters were on the doors stating it was the Bureau of Land Management, Public Scoping Meeting, Lower Gas Hills Conventional Uranium Project, Environmental Impact Statement.

Sign in sheets, comment forms, and informational handouts were on a table at the door, with a BLM staff member attending and greeting. The handouts included a ‘business card’ with the email address to send comments and a dual-sided map and project description “fact sheet.” The sign in sheets had an optional box to check if the individual would like to be added to the Lower Gas Hills Conventional Mining email list. The interested public email list was updated at the completion of the two public meetings. The sign in sheets are attached as Appendix 1. Additional comment forms were on a table with chairs in another area for individuals who chose to provide written comments at the meeting.

Visual aids from the BLM included maps of the project vicinity with overlays for various wildlife concerns, cultural concerns (transportation), watersheds, grazing allotments, and the project area. Visual aids from Strathmore included five 3-D posters depicting the various mine units with flip-board figures that described the life of the project. Additionally, Strathmore had a Power Point presentation available to describe the heap leach workings.

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Summary of Scoping Comments

During the scoping period, six written comments were received:

- Wyoming Department of Agriculture
- Wyoming Game and Fish Department
- United States Environmental Protection Agency
- Biodiversity Conservation Alliance-INFORM-Uranium Watch
- Lloyd Larsen
- Kent Shrifleft

Copies of the written comments are attached as Appendix 2.

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Compilation of verbal comments from the scoping meetings which were held August 6, and 8, and other verbal comments expressed by the public during the scoping period:

- Verbal comments at both of the public meetings voiced support for the project.
- Some people in attendance had connections to the mining area from the 1970's era, and are interested in seeing it open again. Some offered stories about their work experiences.
- One individual expressed concerns for miner safety.
- Attendees were interested in learning about the heap leach mining process.
- Attendees voiced concerns about the types of chemicals used for the mining process and the storage and transportation of such chemicals.
- Attendees voiced support for the project for new jobs and economic growth in the county.
- The boom and bust cycle from the past was discussed and attendees voiced concern about the potential impacts this cycle may have on the local economy.
- Attendees were also supportive of the reclamation which will take place during the project.
- Attendees indicated that the project has relatively strong local support from Jeffrey City and the outlying ranchers and areas.
- Some attendees had concerns about hunting changes in the area: will this project cause major changes to how the wildlife act, and move?
- One individual recognized the fact that the mine units will disturb previously reclaimed mine areas by the State AML program.
- Some attendees questioned how water will be affected and asked if Canyon Creek could be changed to flow as it did before the Lucky Mc Mine?

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Compilation of written comments (Attachment 2):

Concerns:

- Impacts to livestock and grazing activities will occur through project development and reclamation. These impacts should be thoroughly studied and incorporated into the DEIS.
- BLM should analyze such possible effects and enact strict guidelines on spraying to ensure sterilizing and weed management occur only in targeted areas.
- Compensation from Strathmore Resources to livestock permittees to cover costs including but not limited to livestock movement to different allotments or pastures, impact monitoring, construction of water and range improvements on public or private land, purchase or lease of additional grazing land to replace lands lost to grazing and/or reimbursement of water obtained from the uranium mine operation which reduces future use by livestock and wildlife is supported.
- Timely and successful reclamation and mitigation are needed and should be required. The steps to be taken should Strathmore Resources fail to meet such requirements should be clearly stated.
- There are four non-core area Greater Sage Grouse leks within two miles of the permit area. Non-core areas stipulations, including a .25 NSO and 2 mile seasonal stipulation should be analyzed as an alternative.
- Impacts on raptors should be considered and analyzed in the DEIS. Protective measures including nest buffers and timing stipulations should be analyzed as an alternative.
- The amount and duration of construction and production disturbance associated with the proposed project is unknown; impacts of traffic, noise and fencing to enclose mining areas should be analyzed as they pertain to wildlife resources.
- The cumulative impacts of current mining operations on wildlife resources should be discussed in the analyses. The possibility that additional mining will disturb this area after the current proposed open pit and in-situ mining operations end should be discussed in the cumulative impacts.

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- The long-term enclosure of the heap leach area and decontamination of the local environment post-mining should be considered in the analysis.
- A plan for the prevention and control of noxious and undesirable weeds should be provided.
- The amount of existing habitat disturbance in the Lower Gas Hills area and the cumulative impacts of the long-term loss of sagebrush cover in the Gas Hills area should be analyzed.
- Results of past reclamation and a plan for achieving successful reclamation should be thoroughly discussed. Realistic reclamation timelines and goals should be analyzed in the EIS.
- Alternative development scenarios that include minimizing infrastructure or disturbance by combining or sharing facilities and roads with the adjacent Gas Hills mining should be discussed.
- Alternative development scenarios that include using in-situ mining as opposed to open pit mining should be discussed.
- The DEIS should provide maps, descriptions and baseline data of location, condition and quality of groundwater, surface water, wetland resources and ephemeral or intermittent streams that could be impacted.
- Identify underground sources, location, quantity and quality of drinking water, recharge zones and all source water protection areas.
- The DEIS should identify hydrologic pathways of springs or groundwater to surface water and connectivity of streams to each other.
- Identify and describe all wetlands and surface water, including ephemeral or intermittent streams that could be affected by the project.
- The DEIS should provide information about possible impacts to specific water bodies including detailed pollutants and sources.
- Identify surface and groundwater use including location, user type and source identification of agricultural, domestic and public water supply wells or intakes.

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- Mining and heap leaching present the possibility of affecting and lessening nearby water sources by removing groundwater on-site during the dewatering process. The DEIS should describe the expected volume and rate of groundwater pumping during the dewatering process and the resultant cone of depression.
- There is a possibility of long-term acid generation from heap leach pile after the heap has been rinsed and drained if the leached ore contains significant amounts of pyritic material. The DEIS should identify the mineral constituents of the heap material and the potential for acid generation after leaching activities have ceased.
- BLM should identify Best Management Practices to control erosion as developed by the EPA (http://www.epa.gov/npdes/pubs/sector_g_metalmining.pdf).
- There is a possibility of soil erosion and subsequent increased sediment in nearby surface water; the analysis should evaluate construction design and operation practices to minimize erosion and control storm water runoff; utilize appropriate BMPs as developed by the EPA.
- BLM should disclose those permits that would contain provisions to prevent and control storm water. Energy Fuels will be required to obtain a construction and industrial storm water permit from Wyoming DEQ.
- Coordinate with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the Clean Water Action 404 permit if discharge of dredge or fill material into water will occur; implement necessary guidelines into EIS.
- DEIS should develop an alternative that will avoid, minimize or mitigate for the discharge of dredge or fill material into water bodies (jurisdictional waters of the U.S. or others). Demonstrate compliance with Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands, available at: <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/codification/executive-order/11990.html>.
- The DEIS should analyze the project's direct, indirect and cumulative impacts, which may include impacts from emissions of criteria pollutants under the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS), Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) increments, ambient concentrations of hazardous air pollutants and air quality-related values (AQRVs) in Class 1 Areas (e.g. visibility, deposition).

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- The NEPA air quality analysis should include an emissions inventory from all combustion sources (point and mobile) as well as any fugitive emissions (including the heap leach pad). The analysis should then create an appropriate level of analysis for air quality modeling based on the emissions inventory.
- A dust control mitigation plan may be an important consideration for this project. The cumulative impact analysis should analyze long term impacts to human health from the past, present and future mining as well as other sources of radiation.
- The cumulative impact analysis should identify the risk level for nearby residents to be exposed to radiation from radon gas and from ingestion of radioactive particulates.
- Identify potential impacts from deposition of radionuclide-containing dust to nearby watersheds or the food chain as a result of uptake into vegetation and subsequent ingestion by cattle and game animals.
- Include cumulative impact analysis that focuses on human health risk from radiation exposure, air quality and surface water and groundwater.
- Utilize DOE's MILDOS software to analyze cumulative air quality impacts from windblown dust from the waste rock and ore piles and estimate radiological doses and risks from uranium recovery facilities. Combine waste rock and ore piles into one tailings pile in the program. Radon and particulate emissions from associated leaching activity may be found as estimates in the mill's radioactive material license application or as measured values in reports submitted to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.
- There is a potential for portions of the metal, radionuclide and sediment load to enter ground water and streams. The DEIS should identify existing and potential drinking water and irrigation sources, existing or potential impacts from past, present and future uranium mining activities on local drinking water and irrigation supplies and characterize the movement of radionuclides and other toxic metals in groundwater and surface water.
- The analysis might use the Water Erosion Prediction Project (WEPP) model or the WATSED model (available on the U.S. Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station's Air, Water and Aquatic Environments Science webpage in the "Products, Models and Tools" tab) to assess cumulative impacts from land management activities. Any current and historical data should be utilized to identify aquatic organisms.

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- The BLM should ensure reclamation of mine site is protective of public health post-closure. Cattle and game animals grazing on cap can result in public exposure pathway via meat ingestion. BLM should use RESRAD to model radiation exposure and evaluate cap thickness necessary to protect public health; require cap to be of sufficient thickness and integrity.
- The DEIS should evaluate impacts to vegetation from the plant uptake of radon daughters generated from radon migrating into the cap.
- BLM should rigorously explore and objectively evaluate alternatives to heap leaching for uranium recovery. Such alternatives may include in situ uranium recovery technology and transporting uranium ore to an offsite mill for extraction.
- BLM should thoroughly analyze the project area's historic, cultural, archeological, and paleontological resources and undertake full Section 106 consultations with any Native American Tribes that have a connection to the site or any of its resources.
- The DEIS should analyze the details of reclamation and monitoring sureties for the project and the long-term liabilities posed to taxpayers if and when environmental problems develop at the site.
- The DEIS should analyze impacts to recreational users of public lands and adjoining areas.
- The DEIS should analyze any issues of Environmental Justice that are raised by the Proposed Action.
- BLM must develop a conservation alternative in the EIS that recognizes other uses for the land and takes into consideration the long term exclusion of multiple public uses that a uranium heap leach facility creates. BLM should consider the environmental and socioeconomic impacts of using the project area for other purposes than uranium mining, including the reversible decision to conserve the uranium reserves in the ground for future domestic use should it ever be required. BLM should also consider alternative uses of the project area by other industries, such as renewable energy production.

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Benefits:

- There is a potential to improve overall infrastructure of the affected rangeland to better utilize and manage natural resources such as water.
- The project is located in a designated industrial development area and access corridor in the LFO RMP currently being drafted.
- The project will result in increased employment opportunities and economic benefits in the region.
- The Project is considered to have productive private and governmental support.
- Boost local and regional economic development, including increased tax revenues.
- Reclamation of the mining area including disturbances from earlier mining activities.
- Reduction of surface radiological levels in the proposed disturbance areas.
- Reclamation should provide better conditions for wildlife through improved vegetation.

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Attachment 1: Sign in sheets

Lander Field Office
 1335 Main Street
 Lander, WY 82520



Lower Gas Hills Uranium Project Scoping Meeting

August 6, 2013, Fremont County Library, Lander, Wyoming

PLEASE READ: Please be advised that by including your name and address, it will become part of the Lower Gas Hills Uranium Project EIS public record.

PLEASE PRINT

First Name	Last Name	Organization (if applicable)	Mailing Address	Email Address	Add to Lower Gas Hills EIS email list?
Mike	Neumann	Energy Fuels	Address: 225 Union St City: Lander WY 82002 State: WY Zip Code:	meumann@energyfuels.com	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Tom	Hale	Louham Walsh	Address: 7440 S. Creek Rd. City: Sande State: UT Zip Code: 84203	thale@ene.com	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Eric	Blum	Ranger + Journal	Address: 419 E Main St. City: Riverton State: WY Zip Code: 82501	eric@dailyranger.com	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Dave	Thompson	FCC	Address: call City: Beckr at State: 332-1130 Zip Code:	for email for not.f. action	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
			Address: City: State: Zip Code:		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
			Address: City: State: Zip Code:		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

Lander Field Office
1335 Main Street
Lander, WY 82520

Lower Gas Hills Uranium Project Scoping Meeting

August 8, 2013, Fremont County Library, Riverton, Wyoming

PLEASE READ: Please be advised that by including your name and address, it will become part of the Lower Gas Hills Uranium Project EIS public record.

PLEASE PRINT

First Name	Last Name	Organization (if applicable)	Mailing Address	Email Address	Add to Lower Gas Hills EIS email list?
CURS	HYLCE	ORICA	Address: 1089 STAE LN City: BUTTE State: M.T. Zip Code: 59701	Christopher.hylce@orica.com	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
KIM	MORRISON	ENERGY FUELS	Address: 225 S. UNION ST. City: LAKEWOOD State: CO Zip Code: 80228	kmorrison@energyfuels.com	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
ROGER	BOWER	WY BUSINESS COUNCIL	Address: 218 W. MAIN City: RIVERTON State: WY Zip Code: 82501	Rogers.bowen@wybc.com	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
KENT	SHURTLED	Wyoming Community Bank	Address: 1700 N Fork City: Riverton State: Wyo Zip Code: 82506	kshurtled@wyvcb.com	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Frank	Philip	Philip Sleep Co	Address: 313 S. 11th Valley Dr City: SKANI WY State: 82689 Zip Code: 82689	frank.philip@sleep.com	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
DIAN	DAVIS	Riverton, WY Chamber	Address: 213 West MAIN. City: Riverton, State: WY Zip Code: 82501	davedavis@rivertonchamber.com	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>



Lower Gas Hills Uranium Project Scoping Meeting

August 8, 2013, Fremont County Library, Riverton, Wyoming

PLEASE READ: Please be advised that by including your name and address, it will become part of the Lower Gas Hills Uranium Project EIS public record.

PLEASE PRINT

First Name	Last Name	Organization (if applicable)	Mailing Address	Email Address	Add to Lower Gas Hills EIS email list?
Loren	Pedoll	Wyoming Community Bank	Address: 1700 N Federal Blvd City: Riverton State: WY Zip Code: 82501	lpedoll@wyodb.com	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Susan	Bielstein	—	Address: 155 Zig Zag Rd City: Pavillion, WY 82523 State: Zip Code:	Srbie1st@gmail	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Mike	Allread	—	Address: 1202 Pinecrest City: Riverton State: WY Zip Code: 82501	michael.allread@gmail.com	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Doug	Beahn	BRS Energy	Address: 1130 Main St City: Riverton State: WY Zip Code: 82501	dbeahn@wyoming.com	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Harold	Hutson	BRS	Address: 1130 Main St City: RIV State: Zip Code:	khutson@bresnan.net	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Celaz	Benneth	—	Address: 417 Spruce St. City: Riverton State: Zip Code:	cedbenneth307@gmail.com	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>



Lower Gas Hills Uranium Project Scoping Meeting

August 8, 2013, Fremont County Library, Riverton, Wyoming

PLEASE READ: Please be advised that by including your name and address, it will become part of the Lower Gas Hills Uranium Project EIS public record.

PLEASE PRINT

First Name	Last Name	Organization (if applicable)	Mailing Address	Email Address	Add to Lower Gas Hills EIS email list?
John	Gores	Self	Address: 111 N 3rd E City: Riverton State: WY Zip Code: 82501	jimgores@stevens.com	No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Jan	Buriner	U.S. Senator John Bennetts	Address: City: State: Zip Code:		No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
			Address: City: State: Zip Code:		No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
			Address: City: State: Zip Code:		No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
			Address: City: State: Zip Code:		No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
			Address: City: State: Zip Code:		No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/>



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Attachment 2 Written comments



WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

5400 Bishop Blvd. Cheyenne, WY 82006

Phone: (307) 777-4600 Fax: (307) 777-4699

wgfd.wyo.gov

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September 9, 2013

WER 13235

Bureau of Land Management
Lander Field Office
Scoping
Lower Gas Hills Uranium Project
Strathmore Resources, LTD

Bureau of Land Management
Lander Field Office
Attention: Kristin Yannone
1335 Main Street
Lander, WY 82520

Dear Ms. Yannone:

The staff of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) has reviewed the scoping for the Lower Gas Hills Uranium Project for Strathmore Resources, LTD in Fremont County. We offer the following comments for your consideration.

Terrestrial Considerations:

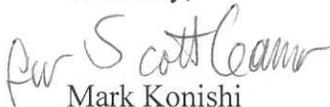
The proposed 11,000 acre permit area is located in a Designated Development Area (DDA) per the recently revised Lander Resource Management Plan (RMP). The operator's proposed action would entail ~5,400 acres of surface disturbance over the 13 year life of the project. Aerial imagery and on-the-ground observation indicate a large amount of existing surface disturbance, presumably from past mining operations, in the project area. The WGFD has not had an opportunity to review the operator's proposed plan of operations. With that in mind, we recommend the following issues pertaining to wildlife resources are considered and/or analyzed in the forthcoming EIS:

- There are four, non-core area leks within 2mi of the permit area: Puddle Springs, West Canyon Creek, Leighi Point, and Mud Springs. The Puddle Springs lek is actually within the mine permit area. Non-core area stipulations, including 0.25 NSO and 2mi seasonal stipulations should be analyzed in an alternative. The EIS should also consider the potential for the discovery of additional leks in close proximity to the permit area.
- Impacts on raptors should be considered and analyzed in the EIS. Protective measures, including nest buffers and timing stipulations, should be analyzed in an alternative.

- The amount and duration of construction and production disturbance (e.g., traffic, noise, enclosures) associated with the proposed project is unknown. We recommend the impacts of traffic, noise, and fencing to enclose mining areas are analyzed as they pertain to wildlife resources. The long-term enclosure of the heap leach area and decontamination of the local environment post-mining should also be considered in the analysis.
- As stated, the permit area contains a large amount of existing surface disturbance from past mining activity and is located adjacent to the proposed Cameco Gas Hills ISR uranium project. The amount of existing habitat disturbance in the Lower Gas Hills area and the cumulative impacts of the long-term loss of sagebrush cover in the Gas Hills area in general should be analyzed.
- A plan for the prevention and control of noxious and undesirable weeds should be provided.
- Results of past reclamation and a plan for achieving successful reclamation should be thoroughly discussed. Current project information indicates that final reclamation will occur in 2027. Realistic reclamation timelines and goals should be analyzed in the EIS.
- The cumulative impacts of current mining operations on wildlife resources should be discussed in the analyses. As mining disturbance has persisted in this area for decades, the possibility or probability that additional mining will disturb this area after the current proposed open pit and in-situ mining operations end should be discussed in the cumulative impacts.
- Alternative development scenarios that include minimizing infrastructure or disturbance by combining or sharing facilities and roads with the adjacent Gas Hills mining operation or using in-situ mining as opposed to open pit mining should be discussed.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Greg Anderson, North Lander Wildlife Biologist, at (307) 332-7723- ext. 236.

Sincerely,



Mark Konishi
Deputy Director

MK/mf/gb

cc: USFWS
Greg Anderson – WGFD, Lander Region
Daryl Lutz – WGFD, Lander Region



Wyoming
DEPARTMENT OF Agriculture

Matthew H. Mead, *Governor*
Jason Fearneyhough, *Director*
2219 Carey Ave. • Cheyenne, WY 82002
Phone: (307) 777-7321 • Fax: (307) 777-6593
Web: agriculture.wy.gov • Email: wda1@wyo.gov

The Wyoming Department of Agriculture is dedicated to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources and quality of life.

August 6, 2013

Ms. Kristin Yannone, Project Manager
Bureau of Land Management
Lander Field Office
PO Box 589
Lander, WY 82520

Dear Ms. Yannone:

Following are the Wyoming Department of Agriculture's (WDA) comments pertaining to the Scoping Notice for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed Lower Gas Hills Conventional Uranium Mine by the Lander Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Our comments are specific to our mission: dedication to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources, and quality of life. As this proposed project and EIS affects our agriculture industry, our natural resources, and the welfare of our citizens, it's important you continue to inform us of proposed actions and decisions and continue to provide the opportunity to express pertinent issues and concerns.

This project will impact grazing permittees, agriculture producers, landowners, and other citizens, as well as our natural resources, both in and near this 12,400-acre project area. For these reasons, we are making the following comments.

Following are specific individual effects upon livestock grazing to analyze in the EIS: decreased Animal Unit Months (AUMS), increased off- and on-road traffic, increased number of speeding vehicles, construction of new roads and modifications to existing roads, increased number of vehicles causing death or impairments of livestock, cut fences, opened gates, damaged range improvements, decreased palatability of vegetation and forage from road dust and development activities, possible unsuccessful reclamation of disturbed areas, introduction and spread of noxious weeds, and other detrimental social and economic impacts on livestock operators and livestock management operations.

The BLM should analyze the effects of possible reduced forage due to "drift" and "run-off" from sterilization of the proposed project area and noxious weed management. Rain and wind during and/or following spraying sterilizers and herbicides, may cause "drift" and "run-off" reducing forage in areas not targeted by a weed control program. We encourage strict guidelines on spraying to ensure the targeted areas of sterilizing and weed management are the only affected areas.

We support compensatory mitigation discussions between Strathmore Resources and livestock permittees to lessen the burden, livestock stress, and economic impacts to grazing permittees due to the proposed development. Such mitigation strategies and costs may include, but are not limited to, the following: movement of livestock to an open allotment or pasture, monitoring of impacts, construction of water and range improvements on either public or private land, purchase or lease of additional grazing land to replace lands lost to grazing, and reimbursement to

Equal Opportunity in Employment and Services

BOARD MEMBERS

Jana Ginter, *District 1* • Jim Hodder, *District 2* • Shaun Sims, *District 3* • John Moore, *District 4* • Alison Lass, *District 5*
Bryan Brost, *District 6* • Jim Price, Jr., *District 7*

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Patrick Zimmerer, *Southeast* • Richard Schlenker, *Northwest* • John Hansen, *Southwest* • Cameron Smith, *Northeast*

water obtained from the uranium mine operation for future use by livestock and wildlife. We stress the importance of water within the project area, and the potential to improve overall infrastructure of the affected rangeland areas to better utilize and manage natural resources.

Timely and successful reclamation and mitigation are needed and should be required. Reclamation and mitigation requirements and the consequences for Strathmore Resources failing to accomplish this reclamation and mitigation should be clearly stated.

Many environmental impact studies are deficient in identifying or analyzing social and economic impacts imposed by proposed energy developments. We strongly recommend this EIS includes a full and thorough social and economic impact analysis. Specifically, since grazing on public lands represents a vital economic value to agriculture producers and local communities, we recommend the analysis includes impacts upon livestock grazing and management in and adjacent to the planning area. The cumulative impacts of energy developments upon grazing may jeopardize the livelihoods of grazing permittees. The loss or impaired ability of livestock grazing operations must be evaluated in the EIS.

In addition to its economic value, grazing also represents irreplaceable environmental and social values, contributing to the preservation of open spaces, the scenic vistas and visual beauty of the area, and the traditional image of the historic rural landscapes of Wyoming and the West. Any loss of these important environmental, historic, and social values of livestock grazing to users and visitors of the area and residents of impacted communities should be included in the scope of the study and the social impacts analyzed in the EIS.

Congressional mandates, federal statutes, and implementing regulations call for multiple use, and should be an integral part of the assessments. Moreover, the EIS should evaluate the impact of this project upon the intent expressed in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 to manage public lands in a manner that will provide food and habitat for fish, wildlife, and domestic animals. The impact upon food and habitat for fish and wildlife are usually well documented in NEPA documents. The consequences of this project upon food and habitat for domestic animals deserve the same degree of study and documentation. Grazing is an essential tool to achieve desired environmental objectives in the planning area, including obtaining positive effects upon food and habitat for both wildlife and livestock. The EIS needs to include 1) these positive effects of livestock grazing upon the environment and as a tool to achieve environmental objectives and 2) the impacts of this project on limiting the ability of livestock grazing to achieve these positive effects.

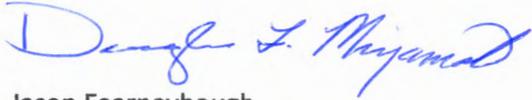
We strongly encourage BLM staff and commercial operators work closely and consistently with affected grazing permittees to address the concerns and recommendations of these stewards of habitat, forage and rangeland health. Moreover, it is imperative that BLM officials continuously inform all livestock grazing permittees who are directly or indirectly affected of the issues, decisions, and resulting actions regarding this proposal.

Peer-reviewed science should underlie BLM's decisions. The EIS must identify the science supporting decisions and discussions regarding this project.

Decisions in the proposed plan should allow BLM officials, grazing permittees and Strathmore Resources the opportunity to work cooperatively. Flexibility to make the best site-specific, case-by-case decisions that are in the best interests of the affected resources and citizens throughout the life of this plan should also be addressed.

In conclusion, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the scope of the proposed actions. We encourage continued attention to our concerns and look forward to hearing about and being involved in proposed actions and decisions.

Sincerely,



FOR Jason Fearneyhough
Director

JF/jc

CC: Governor's Policy Office
Rocky Mountain Farmer's Union
Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts
Wyoming Board of Agriculture
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation
Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Wyoming State Grazing Board
Wyoming Stock Growers Association
Wyoming Wool Growers Association



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 8**

1595 Wynkoop Street
DENVER, CO 80202-1129
Phone 800-227-8917
<http://www.epa.gov/region08>

SEP - 9 2013

Ref: 8EPR-N

Kristin Yannone, Project Manager
Bureau of Land Management
Lander Field Office
1335 Main Street
Lander, WY 82520

Re: Scoping comments for the Lower Gas
Hills Conventional Uranium Project
Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Ms. Yannone:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 8 has reviewed the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Lower Gas Hills Conventional Uranium Project. Consistent with our authority under the National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. Section 4332(2)(C) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, 42 U.S.C. Section 7609, we offer the comments below as you proceed with the Draft EIS.

Project Description

Strathmore Resources, LTD, recently acquired by Energy Fuels, has proposed conventional uranium exploration and development using open pit mining and heap leach recovery methods. The project area encompasses 12,400 acres in an area of historic uranium mining, with a total surface area disturbance of 5,400 acres, approximately 2,000-2,500 of which will be newly disturbed. The project will utilize four separate mining units in phases over a 12-year period. Uranium recovery and processing will occur on-site to produce yellowcake, uranium oxide- U_3O_8 . According to the NOI, when mining operations have ended and the surface has been reclaimed, it is likely that the heap leach area will be restricted from public access and transferred to the Department of Energy (DOE) for long-term custodial care.

Key Issues

We have identified some key issues on which we offer some recommendations for the Draft EIS: surface water, groundwater and wetlands impacts; air quality impacts; cumulative impacts; post-closure human health risks; alternatives; and bond calculations and financial assurance.

Surface Water, Groundwater and Wetlands Impacts

Mining and heap leaching have the potential to significantly impact water resources if the potential impacts are not fully evaluated and effective mitigation measures implemented. Given the EPA's concerns regarding water quality in the proposed development area, we recommend that the BLM include the following in the water resources analysis for the Draft EIS:

- A characterization of existing groundwater, surface water, and wetland resources within the project area, including:
 - Maps of groundwater, surface water, and wetland resources in the area to be developed or affected;
 - Baseline data on the condition and quality of groundwater, surface water, and wetlands;
 - Information on the quantity and location of all aquifers, including Underground Sources of Drinking Water, recharge zones and all source water protection areas;
 - An identification and description of all wetlands and surface water, including ephemeral or intermittent streams, that could be affected by the project alternatives; and, where applicable, acreages, channel lengths, habitat types, values and functions of these waters; and
 - An identification and description of hydrologic pathways, i.e., the connectivity of springs or groundwater to surface water and the connectivity of streams (ephemeral, intermittent, and perennial) to each other.
- Assessment of which waters may be impacted, the sources and nature of potential impacts and specific pollutants likely to impact those waters; and
- Surface water and groundwater use, including the location and source identification of agricultural, domestic and public water supply wells or intakes.

Groundwater drawdown. The EPA is concerned by the potential impact to groundwater where groundwater intersects the areas where material will be excavated. Because dewatering the pits has the potential to draw down groundwater and affect groundwater-dependent resources such as wells, springs, streams or wetlands, we suggest describing the expected volume and rate of groundwater pumping that will occur and the resultant cone of depression.

Acid generation and metals production. Heap leaching is typically performed by adding sulfuric acid to the heap pile to strip out the uranium. In this type of operation, there is concern that the heap leach pile may continue to generate acid after the heap has been rinsed and drained if the leached ore contains significant amounts of pyritic material. Because of this concern, we recommend that the Draft EIS identify the mineral constituents of the heap material and the potential for acid generation after leaching activities have ceased.

Sediment. Since the project has the potential to cause or contribute to erosion of soils and subsequent sediment loading to nearby surface waters, we recommend the NEPA analysis evaluate construction design and operation practices that will be used to minimize erosion and control stormwater runoff from the site. We suggest that BLM consider the BMPs identified by

EPA for the industry¹ and specify those that would be suitable and likely implemented at the Lower Gas Hills site. We also recommend that BLM disclose in the Draft EIS those permits that would contain provisions to prevent and control stormwater. Energy Fuels will be required to obtain a construction and industrial stormwater permit from the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality.

Waters of the U.S. and Wetlands. If the project results in the discharge of dredge or fill material into a water of the U.S., it may require a Clean Water Act (CWA) §404 permit. We recommend consulting the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers² as to whether they have received a permit application for this project and, if so, coordinating with the Corps to utilize the Draft EIS to address the CWA §404(b)(1) guidelines.

If impacts to waters of the U.S. are anticipated from any alternative, we recommend the Draft EIS include a discussion of practicable alternatives that could avoid adverse impacts, minimization efforts to reduce impacts, and finally a mitigation plan to offset any unavoidable adverse impacts to waters of the U.S. Additionally, we recommend the Draft EIS evaluate the potential direct, indirect and cumulative effects to these resources. If the project affects wetlands, whether jurisdictional waters of the U.S. or not, we also recommend demonstrating compliance with Executive Order 11990.

Air Quality Impacts

The proposed project's potential impact on air quality will be an important component of the NEPA analysis. The EPA recommends that Draft EIS analyze the project's direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts, which may include impacts from emissions of the following:

- Criteria pollutants under the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS);
- Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) increments;
- Ambient concentrations of hazardous air pollutants; and
- Air quality-related values (AQRVs) in Class I areas (e.g., visibility, deposition).

The EPA recommends an emissions inventory be completed as the first step in the NEPA air quality analysis. It will be important for the emission inventory to include emissions from all combustion sources whether point sources or mobile, as well as any sources of fugitive emissions (including the heap leach pad). After the emissions inventory is completed, the appropriate level of analysis, including air quality modeling, can be determined. Mitigation, especially dust control, may be an important consideration for this project.

Cumulative Impacts

The cumulative impact analysis provides the context for understanding the magnitude of the impacts of the alternatives by analyzing the additive impacts of other past, present and reasonably foreseeable projects or actions. It also assists in identifying the appropriate type and

¹ http://www.epa.gov/npdes/pubs/sector_g_metalmining.pdf

² <http://www.nwo.usace.army.mil/Missions/RegulatoryProgram/Wyoming.aspx>

level of mitigation required to offset the project's contribution to these impacts. While they may be insignificant individually, cumulative impacts from one or more sources accumulate over time and can result in the degradation of important resources. The EPA recommends the Draft EIS include a detailed cumulative effects analysis of this project and the historic mining that has occurred in the project area, focusing on the following resources:

- human health risk from radiation exposure;
- air quality; and
- surface water and groundwater.

Specifically we recommend cumulative impacts to human health from exposure to radiation analyze long-term impacts to human health from the past, present and future mining as well and other sources of radiation. We recommend the EIS evaluate the risk level for nearby residents to be exposed to radiation from radon gas and from ingestion of radioactive particulates. We also recommend the EIS evaluate the potential impacts from deposition of radionuclide-containing dust to nearby watersheds or to the food chain as a result of uptake into vegetation and subsequent ingestion by cattle and game animals.

For cumulative air quality impacts from windblown dust from the waste rock and ore piles, the Department of Energy's (DOE's) MILDOS software³ could be used. MILDOS is used by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to estimate radiological doses and risks from operating uranium recovery facilities. All of the waste rock and ore piles may be combined and treated as one tailings pile in the program. Radon and particulate emissions from associated leaching activity may be found as estimates in the mill's radioactive material license application or as measured values in reports submitted to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC).

Surface water and groundwater discharges from the project may represent a portion of the metal, radionuclide, and sediment load to groundwater and streams. To assess cumulative impacts from land management activities, we suggest BLM consider using either the Water Erosion Prediction Project (WEPP) model or the WATSED model. These models are available on the U.S. Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station's Air, Water and Aquatic Environments Science webpage⁴ in the "Products, Models and Tools" tab. We also recommend consideration of any current and historical data and information regarding aquatic organisms such as macroinvertebrates and fish.

Analysis of water quality and water supply, including drinking water and irrigation water, is critical because of the linkage to human health effects. The EPA recommends the Draft EIS identify existing or potential impacts from past, present or future uranium mining activities on local drinking water and irrigation supplies. In performing this analysis, we recommend that the Draft EIS identify existing and potential drinking water and irrigation sources, characterize the movement of radionuclides and other toxic metals in groundwater and surface water and identify the impact on water resources.

³ <http://web.ead.anl.gov/mildos/miltile.html?CFID=57962693&CFTOKEN=>

⁴ http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/boise/awae_home.shtml

Post-Closure Human Health Risks

To ensure that reclamation of the mine site is protective of public health after closure, we encourage the BLM to evaluate impacts to vegetation from the plant uptake of radon daughters generated from radon migrating into the cap. Cattle and game animals grazing on the cap can result in a completed public exposure pathway via meat ingestion if the cap is not of sufficient thickness and integrity. We recommend using RESRAD, a DOE program, to model radiation exposure and evaluate cap thicknesses necessary to protect public health.

Alternatives

The EPA recommends the BLM rigorously explore and objectively evaluate alternatives to heap leaching for uranium recovery in the Draft EIS. This recommendation stems both from NEPA itself and from the potential need for an irretrievable and irreversible commitment of resources to long-term management by DOE for heap leach facilities. We recommend the EIS evaluate action alternatives such as:

- *in situ* uranium recovery technology, and
- transporting uranium ore to an offsite mill for extraction.

In situ uranium recovery: The use of *in situ* uranium recovery has become common in recent years. This type of mining and extraction reduces the potential for environmental impact because the waste rock and ore are not managed on the surface and there is a smaller surface footprint. We encourage the BLM to evaluate this alternative if the geological conditions are appropriate for *in situ* uranium recovery.

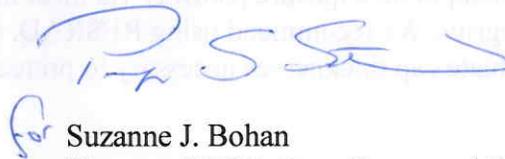
Conventional mining, transport of ore and off-site milling: We also suggest that the Draft EIS include an action alternative that employs conventional mining methods but transports the uranium ore to an off-site mill for processing. The current off-site mill option is Energy Fuel's White Mesa facility in Blanding, Utah. Under this alternative, there would be no heap pile to manage and monitor at the mining facility. A complete analysis of this alternative would include transportation impacts to the mill site. Most conventional off-site mills leach ore in tanks and neutralize tailings before placing them in a licensed tailings impoundment.

Bond Calculations and Financial Assurance

Long-term post-closure monitoring and mitigation measures are needed to ensure that the source control features for the closed heap leach pad(s) are properly maintained. We recommend the Draft EIS assess the long-term maintenance and management activities proposed for the project and provide a cost estimate for post-closure obligations on the operator, Energy Fuels, as well as how the BLM will ensure that these funds will be available for as long as they are needed. This information will enable an understanding of what is necessary to ensure that the long-term financial liability of the project to the federal government in the future is minimized, e.g., under Title II of the Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act of 1978.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the scoping process for the Lower Gas Hills Conventional Uranium Project EIS. If you have any questions about these comments, please contact me at (303) 312-6925 or Maggie Pierce of my staff at (303) 312-6550.

Sincerely,



Suzanne J. Bohan
Director, NEPA Compliance and Review Program
Office of Ecosystems Protection and Remediation



Biodiversity Conservation Alliance • INFORM • Uranium Watch

September 9, 2013

Ms. Kristin Yannone
BLM Lander Field Office
1335 Main Street
Lander, Wyoming 82520

Re: Scoping Comments for Lower Gas Hills Conventional Uranium Project EIS

Via email to: blm_wy_lower_gas_hills_conventional_mine@blm.gov

Dear Ms. Yannone:

These comments are submitted on behalf of Information Network for Responsible Mining and Uranium Watch, representing members and constituencies who are concerned with the potential environmental, public health and socioeconomic impacts of uranium development in the Gas Hills region of Wyoming and across the Western United States. We thank you for the opportunity to submit comments to Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on the scope of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) you are preparing for Strathmore Resources Ltd.'s Lower Gas Hills Conventional Uranium Project in Fremont County, Wyoming.

1. Scoping Should be Re-Initiated Based on Changed Corporate Ownership

Strathmore Resources Ltd. was acquired by Energy Fuels Inc. in a shareholder-approved transaction on Aug. 30, 2013. The ownership of the company proposing this Action has changed and the information about the project proponent and the status of the company should be updated and considered in an accurate scoping notice and before committing public resources to preparation of an EIS. In public communications to shareholders, Energy Fuels has stated that it will re-evaluate Strathmore's Lower Gas Hills Project in the upcoming months in order to determine the feasibility of combining it with the nearby Sheep Mountain Project. This includes an evaluation of whether to create a combined processing facility to serve both mining projects.¹ Because of this corporate acquisition, the Proposed Action could undergo significant revisions and changes, already rendering

¹ See Energy Fuels corporate presentation, including discussion of Lower Gas Hills Project, slides 13-15, online at: http://www.energyfuels.com/resources/presentations/2013_06_20_Corp_Presentation.pdf; Energy Fuels press release dated Sept. 3, 2013, online at: http://www.energyfuels.com/investors/press_releases/index.php?content_id=261; and Energy Fuels press release dated Aug. 14, 2013, online at: http://www.energyfuels.com/investors/press_releases/index.php?content_id=259.

the scoping notice obsolete, and would make any analysis conducted for the Draft EIS outdated and inaccurate. To initiate an EIS for the Lower Gas Hill Project before this substantial issue is settled is premature. It would be a more efficient use of taxpayer resources to delay the EIS and seek scoping comments after answering the question of whether the two mining projects will be combined and after the applications are amended and updated to reflect the applicant's current business plan.

The BLM Lander Field Office is currently conducting a separate EIS for Energy Fuels' Sheep Mountain Project and should consider the forthcoming changes to that proposal because of the acquisition as well.

Additionally, the full proposal (Plan of Operations) for the Lower Gas Hills Project is not yet publicly available, so the full scope of the project is not known. This should be made available before scoping is initiated.

2. Purpose and Need

The uranium market is currently in a 30-year slump and provides limited opportunity for economically viable domestic production to increase. In fact, Energy Fuels and its predecessor Denison Mines USA have sharply contracted ore production at its mines in the Southwestern United States, closing all operating mines in Colorado in 2009 and in Utah in 2012. Currently, Energy Fuels is producing ore at two mines in Arizona, representing a minimal supply in the market. Following the May 2013 announcement that Energy Fuels was acquiring Strathmore, it also announced that it would not proceed with building a conventional mill in New Mexico, should the company decide to proceed with developing Strathmore's Roca Honda Project, because current conventional milling capacity is sufficient at the existing White Mesa Mill in Blanding, Utah. According to Energy Fuels' corporate filings, the White Mesa Mill has produced most of its yellowcake product from pre-existing ore stockpiles and from alternate-feed waste supplies, reducing its need for fresh ore produced from mines.² In statements to investors, Energy Fuels emphasizes that its business model is currently reliant on alternate feed materials and the company actively seeks this revenue out in order to minimize the impacts of low prices for uranium ore and yellowcake.³ Energy Fuels has also announced an intent to maintain licenses even where there is no production plan in the immediate future, suggesting that license acquisition and accumulation, not production, is the real purpose of the Strathmore proposal. The Strathmore proposal should be scrutinized in light of the permitting problems that are well known to BLM's oil and gas regulators.

² See Energy Fuels 3rd Quarter Consolidated Financial Statement, dated June 30, 2013, available online at: http://www.energyfuels.com/_resources/financials/Jun_30_2013_FS_FNs.pdf.

³ See Energy Fuels press release, Oct. 17, 2012, available online at: http://www.energyfuels.com/investors/press_releases/index.php?content_id=228.

The request for new permits where the industry is actively abandoning approved production plans provides a stark illustration of how weak the demand is for conventionally produced uranium ore and the unfavorable outlook for the market. The scope of analysis within the purpose and need section should address the fact that conventional mining techniques are the most expensive and therefore are the most sensitive to the volatilities of the market. The EIS must take a serious and thorough look at the purpose and need for increased uranium production from the Lower Gas Hills Project and the unique difficulties that it faces in sustaining production rates at this site over time. Careful analysis will likely reveal that there is no purpose or need served by permitting another uranium project where it is foreseeable that it will be mothballed shortly after construction, should it open at all. The excess capacity and conditions at the conventional mills that are currently licensed (Sweetwater Mill (Wyoming), Piñon Ridge (Colorado), White Mesa (Utah), and Ticaboo Mill (Utah)) should be analyzed as part of the purpose and need statement.

The purpose and need of the Lower Gas Hills Project is undefined in the *Federal Register* scoping notice, but needs to be clearly articulated and explained to the public. The EIS should take into consideration the consequences of accepting the environmental and cumulative impacts of uranium mining in the Gas Hills district when the final product is destined for export to an international market (two major shareholders and product recipients of Energy Fuels are South Korea's KEPCO and Japan's Sumitomo Corporation), which provides little benefit to local communities. Although uranium mining in the Gas Hills district was initially authorized by the Atomic Energy Act of 1946 with the stated purpose of supplying domestic demand — even as the prior history of mining in the region is often cited as justification for resuming it — that obligation no longer exists and the final yellowcake produced from the region is simply to be sold on the global market without concern for satisfying specific demands. The EIS should take into consideration and recognize that a surplus of uranium is already held by the Department of Energy (DOE) that can satisfy domestic demand.

3. Proposed Alternatives

BLM has identified a No Action Alternative and a Proposed Action Alternative in the scoping notice. However, scoping will confirm that additional and diverse alternatives present some valid choices and options for the public to consider in the Draft EIS. The improved decision-making that results from a robust investigation and consideration of a variety of serious alternatives is the highest goal of any analysis undertaken under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

In this case, there is first and foremost the issue of considering additional alternatives to open air heap-leach processing.

Heap-leach processing is an outdated technology that has simply outlived its usefulness, particularly in the production of uranium, and is no longer utilized domestically for this processing this mineral. Throughout the history of uranium mining in the United States, heap-leach processing has never been deployed responsibly and has never successfully resulted in a fully reclaimed site; while sites that have needed remediation have never been fully successful. Regulations for heap-leach processing have not been seriously analyzed since the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) on Uranium Milling⁴ in 1980. The Environmental Protection Agency did include radon emissions from heap-leach operations as part of their 1989 radioactive National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (40 C.F.R. Part 61) but did not establish any standards for the emission of radon from open-pit mines. Because the framework for regulating heap-leach processing and conventional uranium mining is so outdated, the public can have little confidence that its interests will be protected if projects are approved without taking the time to substantially update and approve standards. In the face of outdated regulations and the lack of a modern EIS that could satisfy NEPA's tiering requirements, there is no question that a full EIS with a very broad scope is needed for this project. This is a serious question that BLM and cooperating agencies that will regulate the Lower Gas Hills Project must address in the EIS. At the same time, the differences in the impacts between a centralized heap-leach facility that serves both the Lower Gas Hills Project and the Sheep Mountain Project and a facility that is operated exclusively for Lower Gas Hills should be analyzed and considered.

In addition, other alternatives to heap-leach processing should be identified and considered. There is the potential to haul the ore offsite to a conventional mill for processing; either by constructing a new mill in the Gas Hills district, hauling ore to the standby mill in Sweetwater, Wyoming, or hauling ore to the White Mesa Mill in Utah. While the choice in manner and location of processing may be almost entirely determined by economic factors on the part of the project applicant, it is in the public's best interest to determine not only what is economically feasible but also what is environmentally responsible when making these decisions. Even if long-distance haulage may prove uneconomic, NEPA prohibits agencies from asserting predetermined conclusions and requires interdisciplinary analysis and comparison across alternatives, even ones that may or may not be implemented.

Second, there are additional mining methods to be considered. The feasibility of underground mining rather than open pit mining should be investigated and the differences in impacts considered. The feasibility of in-situ leach mining at the Lower Gas Hills site should be analyzed as well in the EIS.

⁴ Available online at: <http://pbadupws.nrc.gov/docs/ML0327/ML032751663.pdf>.

Because uranium provides a uniquely irreversible set of impacts, BLM must also develop a conservation alternative in the EIS that recognizes other uses for the land and takes into consideration the longterm exclusion of multiple public uses that a uranium heap leach facility creates. After mining, unless tailings are moved to another site, portions of these public lands will be turned over to DOE or another responsible agency for permanent disposal and monitoring and will become unavailable for use by people, other industries, and wildlife over the long-term. As such, BLM should consider the environmental and socioeconomic impacts of using the project area for other purposes than uranium mining, including the reversible decision to conserve the uranium reserves in the ground for future domestic use should it ever be required and uses of the project area by other industries, such as renewable energy production.

The Gas Hills district experienced a fair amount of historic open pit mining in earlier decades, leaving numerous un-reclaimed open pits in the project area and vicinity. An alternative should be developed that examines the possibility and importance of reclaiming these sites for beneficial public use before allowing new projects within the Gas Hills district. A similar conclusion has been reached by the Navajo Nation and other government entities faced with the proposals for renewal and expansion of an industry notorious for not cleaning its mess before starting new projects. The reclamation alternative would serve the unspoken purpose and need by generating local employment that is often more stable than the jobs created by new mining. The socioeconomic impacts related to an emphasis on reclamation before expansion should be looked at and carefully compared to those created by the Proposed Action.

4. Impacts Analysis

BLM should consider all environmental, socioeconomic, public health and cumulative impacts of the Lower Gas Hills Project including, but not limited to:

- The potential for acid mine drainage to be generated from spent heaps after processing has concluded;
- The impacts and potential for toxic and radioactive dust particles to be generated from open pits, ore stockpiles, heap leaches and other features of the disturbed areas during prolonged periods of standby that are typically created by the volatility of uranium prices;
- The potential for radioactive contaminants to affect the project site or migrate offsite into surrounding surface areas or water supplies due to the long-term difficulty of maintaining liners, caps and leak detection systems;

- The long-term viability of protective measures and mitigations to prevent harm to the surrounding environment;
- The long-term impacts of exposure to radioactive materials to miners and employees during operations;
- The long-term impacts of airborne contaminants and exposure to humans, wildlife and vegetation created by dust during operations;
- The impacts to ground and surface water supplies and the depletion of these supplies in order to operate the mine and process uranium;
- The ability of the applicant to protect surface and ground water supplies during operations, including preventing contamination of aquifers and controlling storm flows and erosion;
- The impacts to the human environment and wildlife caused by lighting and the importance of dark skies;
- The impacts from increased haulage on roads and traffic in the project area;
- The impacts from new road construction;
- Visual impacts from roadways and to communities;
- The impacts from the dewatering of existing, historic open pits in the project area and the methods for treating and discharging contaminated waters;
- The impacts created by the necessity of treating water in the project area in perpetuity;
- The potential for open pits to permanently accumulate water during mining and the methods for preventing contamination from these water supplies during and after reclamation and backfilling of the pits;
- Impacts from the permanent disposal of mine spoils in the excavated open pits and how the long-term integrity of any preventive measures taken will be upheld;
- Impacts to riparian areas, wetlands, watersheds and flood plains;
- The impacts to wildlife attracted to ponds created by open pits, evaporation ponds, storage ponds, and ponds to capture the leachate solution;

- The impacts to aquatic life in receiving waters from toxins, radionuclides, dissolved solids, acidity and other water quality impacts created by mining and heap leach processing;
- The impacts to grazing livestock in the project area and vicinity of the mine, including the reduction of grazing allotments;
- The impacts to species protected under the International Migratory Bird Treaty;
- The impacts to grazing wildlife such as deer and antelope that rely on the project area for winter and breeding habitat, including the impacts of any fencing on migratory corridors;
- The impacts to species listed under the Endangered Species Act;
- The impacts to species of special management concern;
- The long-term impacts and changes to vegetative cover in the project area and vicinity, including weed control and the choice of reclamation techniques and species for revegetation;
- Impacts to recreational users of public lands and adjoining areas;
- Any issues of Environmental Justice that are raised by the Proposed Action;
- The community impacts created by the boom-and-bust cycle of uranium mining and the possible negative impacts from unsustainable job development;
- The socioeconomic impacts, including the potential for negative economic stigma on nearby communities, from the Proposed Action;
- The details of reclamation and monitoring sureties for the project and the long-term liabilities posed to taxpayers if and when environmental problems develop at the site;

The Draft EIS should carefully consider the impacts to wildlife and BLM should undergo formal consultation with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. A species of particular importance to consider is the Greater Sage-Grouse, which is a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act. The project area is surrounded by critical habitat for the bird, including a number of leks (breeding sites), and at least two leks are located within the project's permitted area. The protection of leks is especially critical to the restoration of the Greater Sage-Grouse, which is a goal shared by BLM and numerous states, including Wyoming. The Draft EIS should outline

all the potential impacts to the recovery of the sage-grouse and identify the best possible management strategies for protecting both the immediate and long-term impacts of uranium mining. Research has documented that leks are severely impacted by the close proximity of extractive industry activities and require protective buffer zones in order to reduce the likelihood that they will be abandoned.⁵

The pocket gopher and the pygmy rabbit are two additional species that are considered for listing under the Endangered Species Act that have potential habitat in the area. The Draft EIS should include a thorough inventory of the project area and surroundings in order to definitively determine whether or not habitat for these species exists in the project vicinity and whether it will be impacted.

In addition, BLM should thoroughly analyze the project area's historic, cultural, archeological, and paleontological resources and undertake full Section 106 consultations with any Native American Tribes that have a connection to the site or any of its resources.

As an underlying basis for conducting the EIS, BLM should provide a thorough site analysis that carefully documents the existing conditions of the area to be permitted, as well as the area that would be impacted. Any existing environmental problems at and near the site, particularly those impacts to public lands, should be corrected as a precursor to new activities and should be addressed through any approvals of the Lower Gas Hills Project. This analysis should include establishment of baseline ground and surface water quality, water availability, climate and weather conditions, flood plains and hazards, geological hazards, wildlife and vegetation surveys, radiological surveys of the surface, geochemical composition of the ore and waste rock, and the potential for acid generation and exposure of toxic and radioactive materials.

The Lower Gas Hills Project will create direct impacts to people, nearby communities, wildlife and endangered species, water supplies, air quality, soil quality, vegetation, agriculture, recreational and scenic values of public lands, local and regional economies, roads and other infrastructure, surface waters and riparian areas. Indirect impacts include long-term changes in how the land is managed and how it is used by the public. Approval of the Lower Gas Hills Project will also create cumulative impacts to a region already scarred by historic mining practices of the past that will also be exacerbated by the approval of other uranium mines in nearby locations. These impacts are significant and we look forward to a thorough and detailed review from BLM.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of these comments.

⁵ See, for example, discussion of sage grouse conservation issues included in Biodiversity Conservation Alliance report, "Wind Power in Wyoming," online at: http://www.voiceforthewild.org/documents/wind_power.pdf.

Respectfully submitted,

Duane Short, Wild Species Program Director
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Sarah M. Fields, Director
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sarah@uraniumwatch.org
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Lower Gas Hills Uranium Project.

1 message

Lloyd Larsen <lloydlarsen@wyoming.com>

Wed, Aug 28, 2013 at 1:59 PM

To: BLM_WY_Lower_Gas_Hills_Conventional_Mine@blm.gov

I attended the public information meeting for the Lower Gas Hills Uranium Project held in Lander, Wyoming and found the information very useful in helping me understand the scope of the proposed Strathmore Minerals project.

This proposed project is to take place in a designated mining district with most of the development on land that has previously been disturbed by earlier mining operations. The reclamation proposal for the project when it is completed is even more extensive than the existing reclamation effort completed on this same land with the remaining "high walls" left over from previous mines being contoured more extensively into the landscape.

The development has no impact that I could see in existing waterways and does not take place inside areas known to be critical habitat for the sage grouse or migrating big game. There are some areas that contain habitat used by some threatened species such as the mountain plover, but with all of the other area currently available to these species, I find this impact negligible.

With the new technologies available to locate ore deposits, it only makes sense to me to go back over these previously mined areas and retrieve those minerals left behind by antiquated techniques used in the past.

The production of these resources would generate jobs for the local economy and revenue for the state. This is a very critical issue to understand as this process moves forward.

I am in favor of this project and feel it is important to this state. It is important as the permitting process is followed to insure that there are no unnecessary delays.

Sincerely,

Lloyd Charles Larsen
1076 South Second Street
Lander, Wyoming
307-332-6931

Written Comment Sheet

Lower Gas Hills Uranium Project



Lander Field Office
1335 Main Street



Wyoming should look no further in terms of supporting this beneficial project. The productive private and governmental sector opportunities, created by this project, are undeniable. This project fits within the framework of the environmental arena, it is being proposed on Wyoming land that has already been disturbed and reclaimed. The livestock industry can continue to utilize the grazing. The sportsman can continue to harvest the wildlife bounty. The industry has shown they can reclaim the landscape. This project reeks of multiple use and productive jobs. Let's chain up and go.



Please provide your contact information.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address or any other personally identifying information (PII) in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including PII – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your PII from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Name: Kent C. Shurtleff Title: _____

Mailing address: P.O. Box 224

City, State, Zip: Kinnear, WY 82516

Phone: 856-4960 E-mail: Kshurtleff@wyoming.com

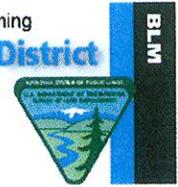
Please hand in your completed comment sheet at the open house or mail it to us by September 9, 2013, to ensure your input is considered.

Thank you for your interest and participation!

Written Comment Sheet

Lower Gas Hills Uranium Project

Bureau of Land Management Wyoming
Wind River/Bighorn Basin District



Lander Field Office
1335 Main Street
Lander, WY 82520

We want your comments! If you have any issues, concerns or questions that you would like addressed in the proposed Lower Gas Hills Uranium Project, please complete this comment sheet, fold it in on the lines with the return address showing, tape it closed, affix a stamp, and drop it in the mail to us. You may attach additional pages. If you prefer, you may email your comments to BLM_WY_Lower_Gas_Hills_Conventional_Mine@blm.gov.

I see no reason that this project should not proceed to implementation. Virtually all of the area was previously disturbed. The product will certainly benefit the human environment w/tn little if any adverse effect to the natural environment.

Please provide your contact information.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address or any other personally identifying information (PII) in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including PII – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your PII from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Name: Jim Gores Title: _____

Mailing address: 505 Northridge

City, State, Zip: Riverton, WY 82501

Phone: 856-6479 E-mail: jimg@goresbusiness.com

Please hand in your completed comment sheet at the open house or mail it to us by September 9, 2013, to ensure your input is considered.

Thank you for your interest and participation!