



NRC NEWS

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NRC DETERMINES NO MAJOR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS PRECLUDE LICENSING NICHOLS RANCH URANIUM RECOVERY SITE IN WYOMING

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has determined there are no major environmental impacts that would preclude licensing the Nichols Ranch uranium recovery project proposed for Johnson and Campbell counties in Wyoming.

In its final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the Nichols Ranch project, the NRC determined only small to moderate environmental impacts would result from the construction, operation, aquifer restoration and decommissioning of the proposed in-situ recovery facility. Most of the impacts are projected to be “small,” meaning they would be undetectable or so minor that they would not noticeably alter any important attribute of the resource in question. The SEIS also identifies “small to moderate” socioeconomic impacts, primarily due to the potential need for additional housing for employees at the facility and economic activity generated by the facility. “Moderate” impacts are defined as being sufficient to alter the resource noticeably, but not destabilize its important attributes.

The Nichols Ranch report is a supplement to the NRC’s Generic Environmental Impact Statement for In-Situ Leach Uranium Milling Facilities (GEIS, NUREG-1910), published in June 2009, which analyzed potential environmental impacts common to in-situ recovery facilities in the western United States. The Nichols Ranch supplement analyzes potential environmental impacts specific to the proposed facility.

A draft SEIS for Nichols Ranch was published for public comment in December 2009. The final SEIS addresses the comments received on the draft report.

Uranerz Energy Corp. submitted the license application for Nichols Ranch on Nov. 30, 2007. The proposed project will be located in the Pumpkin Buttes Uranium Mining District of the Powder River Basin, about 46 miles south-southwest of Gillette and 60 miles north-northeast of Casper. The project would cover nearly 3,400 acres, of which about 300 acres would be directly affected by operations. The facility would recover and mill uranium for use in fuel for commercial nuclear power plants.

The Nichols Ranch SEIS, NUREG-1910 Supplement 2, is available on the NRC website at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/nuregs/staff/sr1910/s2/>. The final report was transmitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on Jan. 21. *Federal Register* notices will be published by EPA and NRC on Jan. 28.

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