

# SD Uranium Mine Moves Forward

Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A proposed uranium mine in southwestern South Dakota cleared a key regulatory hurdle Thursday when a federal agency issued a favorable environmental assessment of the project.

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission said its final supplemental environmental impact statement found there is nothing that would preclude licensing the proposed Dewey-Burdock mine. The report said the project would generally have small impacts on the area's soil, water, air and economy.

An estimated workforce of 86 during construction, and two fewer once the mine begins operating would have limited impact on local housing, the employment rate, schools and other services, it said.

However, the NRC said it will not issue a license until completing a review of the proposed mine's impact on historical and cultural resources. An NRC board also will hold public hearings later this year to get comments from area residents.

In addition, the project still needs approval from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and two state boards.

Powertech Uranium Corp. plans to use a method known as in-situ recovery, which would pump groundwater fortified with oxygen and carbon dioxide into the underground ore deposits to dissolve the uranium. The water would be pumped back to the surface, where the uranium would be extracted and sold to nuclear power plants.

Powertech President Richard Clement said the economic report is a milestone and he looks forward to the project getting a license.

"The depth and extent of the review provides a resounding confirmation on the benefits and limited environmental impact of the project," Clement said in a written statement.

Opponents of the mine, who believe it will pollute water in the area, said they will continue to fight the project.

Lilias Jarding of the Clean Water Alliance, a Black Hills group, said the environmental review is flawed because it doesn't take into account some conditions at the site. The project still needs approval by other agencies, she noted.

"The project has not gotten the go-ahead by any means," Jarding said.

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The EPA is still reviewing the project's proposed injection of water into the ground to dissolve the uranium. After those are complete, two state boards — the Board of Minerals and Environment and South Dakota Water Management Board — will resume hearings to determine whether to issue project a state mining permit and some water permits.

Powertech project manager Mark Hollenbeck said he was pleased with the NRC report on the proposed mine.

"The NRC clearly says we can do it without adverse effects on the environment, which is what we've been saying all along," Hollenbeck said.

The proposed mine would produce about 1 million pounds of uranium oxide a year for the next two decades. It is about 13 miles northwest of Edgemont, close to the Black Hills National Forest.

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