

# Arguments Fly Over Proposed SD Uranium Mine

Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A company proposing a uranium mine near Edgemont needs better studies to ensure that its operations won't hurt cultural and historic sites in the Black Hills, an attorney representing the Oglala Sioux Tribe said Tuesday.

Three administrative judges of the federal Atomic Safety and Licensing Board listened to telephone arguments on its April decision to put a temporary hold on the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission operating license for Powertech Uranium Corp.

Chairman William Froehlich said the board, which is part of the NRC, will issue a decision within a few days.

One of the tribe's attorneys, Jeff Parsons of the Western Mining Action Project, said the tribe needs to make sure sites of significance aren't harmed, and a hold would "protect those cultural resources from any further impact."

Christopher Pugsley, an attorney for Powertech, said it's typical for companies planning in-situ recovery facilities to drill sampling wells to gather data on ground water even before submitting license applications. He said those activities can be done without an NRC permit.

"That does not necessarily mean that those wells would in any way be used in the production operation," Pugsley said.

Powertech still needs approval from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The state Board of Minerals and Environment and state Water Management Board suspended hearings late last year until the federal agencies make decisions.

Pugsley said that continuing the hold could delay state licensing efforts.

Edgemont is less than 20 miles away from the Nebraska border in southwest South Dakota. The Pine Ridge Reservation is to the east of Edgemont.

The company 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.

The mine, which would sit within a 17-square-mile site, is projected to recover 1 million pounds of uranium annually for eight years.

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