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NUCLEAR BOARD REJECTS POWERTECH URANIUM'S CLAIMS

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The Atomic Safety and Licensing Board, a decision-making body that is hearing arguments around the proposed Dewey-Burdock uranium mine, has supported the arguments of opponents of the mine. The Board, composed of administrative judges, rejected arguments put forth by Powertech Uranium, which wants to develop an in situ leach uranium mine north of Edgemont, S.D.

In a Memorandum and Order, the Board rejected Powertech's attempts to prevent the Oglala Sioux Tribe and local residents from formally raising their concerns about the lack of a scientific basis for the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission's environmental review of the Dewey-Burdock project. This environmental review, called a draft supplemental environmental impact statement, was released in November 2012. It was authored by personnel from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), and those staff supported Powertech's positions.

Attorney Jeff Parsons, who represents the Oglala Sioux Tribe, says that "As a result of the Board's ruling, Powertech must go back and conduct significant new environmental and cultural studies – efforts that should have been made long ago when the licensing process began."

The Board was appointed by the NRC to hear arguments made by the public, the Tribe, Powertech, and NRC staff. In its decision, the Board also said that the Tribe and local residents have raised substantial concerns with the environmental review – particularly as it relates to protection of local groundwater and significant cultural resources present at the proposed mine site. As a result, the NRC staff must now follow federal laws that require a rigorous scientific study of the serious impacts that the mine would have on groundwater and cultural resources. The NRC staff must also carefully study Powertech's proposed measures to minimize the impacts to groundwater and cultural resources.

Lilias Jarding of Rapid City, who represents the Clean Water Alliance, points out that "This project will continue to languish until Powertech takes its responsibility seriously – if it wants to mine, it is also responsible for insuring that important groundwater and cultural and historic resources at the proposed uranium mine site are protected."

The Clean Water Alliance is a collection of citizens who are concerned about the health, environmental and economic impacts that proposed uranium mining projects would have on our communities, people, economy, and natural resources. Our address is P.O. Box 591, Rapid City, S.D. 57709. Our e-mail address is nobhuranium@gmail.com.