

In Situ Recovery of Uranium: Regulatory Status and Economic Benefits

Mark Hollenbeck

Dewey Burdock Project Manager, Powertech (USA), Inc., P.O. Box 812, Edgemont, SD 57735,
email: mhollenbeck@powertechuranium.com

Aldo Leopold, the Father of the American Conservation Movement, opined about the two spiritual dangers of not owning a farm – “the danger in supposing that breakfast comes from the grocery; and that heat comes from the furnace.” Well, I don’t own a farm but I own an organic ranch about twelve miles northwest of Edgemont where I, my wife and four young kids reside and nearby about 400 feet below the surface lay uranium ore deposits amenable to in situ recovery (ISR). ISR recovers valuable uranium metals in place with minimal disturbance of vegetation, topsoil, overburden, or host rock. It recovers uranium by drilling water wells, adding oxygenated groundwater and pumping the dissolved metal to the surface. This ‘light touch’ process will provide clean fuel for nuclear energy production.

Powertech is nearly finished with the lengthy, expensive permitting and licensing application process, and, once completed, and NRC, EPA and DENR approval received, the company plans to begin operations within 18 months.

Benefits from the Dewey-Burdock Project will be plentiful – providing the fuel for energy which emits no greenhouse gases or chemical pollutants and economic vitality.

Local and state economies will strengthen from 84 full-time positions and 36 support ones positions. Additionally, Powertech anticipates investing more than \$300 million during the first 16 years of operations resulting in \$7 million in sales tax. Regional communities will benefit through increased business activity. Fall River and Custer Counties will receive significant amounts in property taxes as well as half of the estimated \$20 million in mineral severance taxes while the State receives a \$1.1 million conservation tax.

Like Leopold, as a rancher I know where my food and fuel comes from which helps explain why I find this project satisfying, worthwhile and valuable to Edgemont, the State and the Nation.