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## Public input on uranium set

### Hearing scheduled for Powertech mine proposal

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Colorado mining regulators have finalized a hearing schedule for proposed state rules that will determine how Powertech USA can proceed with its plans to construct a uranium mine in Weld County less than 15 miles northeast of Fort Collins.

Powertech is in the process of obtaining state and federal approval for its Centennial Project in situ, or "in place," uranium mine between Nunn and Wellington near the Larimer County line.

If built, the mine would use a baking soda solution to leach the uranium from an underground rock formation, possibly affecting underlying aquifers.

Since Gov. Bill Ritter signed a 2008 law, House Bill 1161, requiring companies doing in situ leach mining to safeguard groundwater, state mining regulators have been working with Powertech and others in the uranium mining industry to write rules governing how the law is implemented.

So far, the rules-writing has been informal, but the state on Wednesday released its plans for a formal public process for the final approval of the rules by the state Mined Land Reclamation Board.

The board is asking for the public to make its voice heard on the proposed rules at an April 15 hearing at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Loveland. It will be the first formal public hearing on the rules, but how many hearings there will be isn't clear.

Mined Land Reclamation Office Director David Berry said he couldn't say when the board will make a final decision.

"The process may take several months to ensure that all input is properly considered," he said, adding that public interest in the proposed rules so far has been "significant."

The board set a March 1 deadline for written comments from the public about the proposed rules.

Those who want to be a party to the hearing - someone who believes they have a direct interest in the rules and can offer alternatives - must submit a written request by Feb. 23. Those granted "party" status are given an elevated legal status in the hearing process and must attend an April 6 prehearing conference at the Denver Art Museum.

Jackie Adolph of Citizens Against Resource Destruction, which opposes the Centennial Project's potential impact on groundwater, said she believes public input in the rulemaking process is important to protect the water.

"I think that we will have quite a bit of public participation in this process," she said.

## Additional Facts

### Proposed rules and more

The proposed rules, the hearing schedule and contact information are available online at <http://mining.state.co.us/Rulemaking.htm>.

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