

# Uranium Watch – Utah Bulletin

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## ◇ Division of Water Rights to Hold Hearing on Protests of Withdrawal of Water For Nuclear Reactor on January 12 in Green River

The Utah Division of Water Rights will hold a hearing on the protests of the withdrawal of water from the Green River for the nuclear reactor that Blue Castle Holdings, Inc. (BCH) has proposed for a site a few miles west of the City of Green River.

The hearings will start at 9:00 a.m. on January 12, 2010, at the John Wesley Powell Museum, 1765 East Main, Green River—on the east side of the Green River bridge.

In 2007 Transition Power Development (now BCH) leased 24,000 acre-feet of water from the San Juan Water Conservancy District and 29,600 acre-feet of water from the Kane County Water Conservancy District—a total of 53,600 acre-feet (almost 50 million gallons per day). The water rights would need to be transferred from the San Juan and Colorado Rivers to the Green River.

Uranium Watch and Living Rivers, along with a number of individuals, organizations, and governmental entities protested the Water Conservancy Districts' proposed water right changes. Protesters include Green River ranchers, farmers, canal companies, and river expedition companies, who are concerned about the adverse impacts to the availability of Green River water for agricultural, boating, and other recreational uses if the water is withdrawn from the river. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service submitted concerns about the effects of the withdrawal on endangered and threatened fish species. They are concerned that the impacts on threatened fish species would result in having to list them as endangered species, triggering additional federal actions and bringing the total to six endangered fish species in the Green River.

Little information is available in the application, and many questions remain about the project's economic feasibility and the amount of water that would be available without adversely impacting other Green River water users. There are concerns about the impacts to river recreation and down stream environment, the long-term effects of climate changes and drought to water availability, and the financial ability of BCH or some other entity to complete project.

According to BCH's website ([www.bluecastleproject.com/](http://www.bluecastleproject.com/)), they are "accumulating the required assets to begin licensing a shovel ready site for the deployment of a new nuclear power production facility." BCH intends to apply for an Early Site Permit from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. It does not appear that BCH would be the one to construct and operate the proposed reactor. More information: <http://www.uraniumwatch.org/bluecastle.htm>

## ◇ Division of Air Quality Sends Letter to Uranium Mine Owners Regarding Compliance with Radon Emissions Requirements

The Utah Division of Air Quality sent out letters to uranium mine owners requesting information about their uranium mine operations and informing them that their uranium mines may be subject to Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requirements for the emission of radon. The DAQ has authority of the uranium mine radon emissions and other radionuclide National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (40 C.F.R. Part 61). Uranium mines that have or are expected to mine over 100,000 tons of ore over the life of the mine are required to conduct radon monitoring and submit annual reports verifying compliance with the exposure limit to the nearest residents (10 mrem/year). The radon is vented from the underground mine

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operations so that the miners are not exposed to the radon gas and highly radioactive particles that result from the decay of the radon in the mine, which can cause cancer.

Mine owners must also submit an application and receive DAQ's approval DAQ prior to construction or modification of any source of radon at the mines and notify the DAQ of startup. Denison Mines Corporation has been operating their uranium mines in Utah (Pandora, La Sal Complex, and Tony M Mine) without submitting such an application and receiving the DAQ's approval. They did not notify the DAQ of the startup of uranium mine operations in La Sal.

Uranium Watch became aware of this and brought it to the attention of the DAQ and EPA. After intervention of the EPA, the State of Utah has begun to improve their program to administer and enforce regulations related to the emission of radon from uranium mines in Utah and require applications from the mine owners.

**◆ New Denison Mines Tailings Cell Would Destroy Ancient Cultural Resources**

The new tailings impoundment that Denison Mines Corporation proposes for their uranium mill on White Mesa would cause the destruction of about 14 archeological sites on the Mesa. The original construction of the mill in southeastern Utah caused the destruction of pre-historic habitations and other sites. The sites were where early residents of the Four Corners area lived and processed the food that was hunted and gathered. Cell 4B would impact over 50 acres. The archeological sites would be "mitigated," that is, the sites would be opened up and artifacts and information about the sites would be gathered and placed in a museum. Then most of the sites would be destroyed. None of the artifacts collected in the late 1970s or early 1980s from the destruction of the White Mesa archeological sites were ever put on display.

The Utah Division of Radiation Control (DRC) must develop an environmental assessment and approve a license amendment to construct the new tailings impoundment. The environmental assessment and draft amendment will be made available for public comment. If the DRC does not schedule a public hearing in Blanding, a hearing can be requested. More information: <http://www.uraniumwatch.org/denisonmill.cell4B.htm>

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