

# Uranium Watch – Utah Bulletin

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## ◆ Citizens Provide Testimony at Protest Hearings on Water for Nuclear Reactor in Green River

Citizens of Green River and Grand County along with representatives of state and national organizations, provided testimony at the Utah Division of Water Right's all-day hearings in Green River on January 12. The Kane County and San Juan County Water Conservancy Districts' legal representative, John Mabey; Blue Castle Holdings Inc. (BCH) CEO, Aaron Tilton; and their experts gave a lengthy presentation in support of the proposed transfer of water rights from the Colorado River and San Juan River to the Green River for Blue Castle Project.

The Applicant's testimony was short on specifics about the impacts of the withdrawal of the water; the economic feasibility of the project; who would license, construct and operate the power plant; the structures that would be used to divert and transport the water to the proposed reactor site; and what would happen to the high level nuclear waste produced by the reactor. Aaron Tilton claimed that BCH had an agreement to purchase the site for the reactor, which is not true. BCH has not purchased the site, which has been leased by Emery County from SITLA, and does not have a purchase agreement with Emery County.

BCH expects to get Utah tax breaks for the reactor, but the benefits to the citizens of Utah are questionable. BCH claims that 50% of the electricity would remain in Utah, but there is nothing to support that claim. Utah would bear the burden of the tax breaks, even for power that went out of state. Utah would bear the burden of the release of chemical and radioactive emissions from the reactor, the threat of a reactor accident, and the long-term storage of high-level nuclear waste on site.

Protesters presented testimony on the impacts of the withdrawal of 74 cubic feet per second (53,600 acre feet) on the Green River environment, the lack of available water over time due to other water use commitments and climate change, agreements that must be met in support of endangered fish species, the physical and economic feasibility of the project, lack of specific information and data, and adverse impacts to local agricultural and recreational uses and the health and well being of the community. The State Engineer has held the record open until March 1 to receive additional testimony from all the parties.

- Audio of January 12, 2010, Hearings: <http://www.waterrights.utah.gov/cgi-bin/docview.exe?Folder=HEARINGS&Key=Sort+by+Date>
- Documents: <http://waterrights.utah.gov/cgi-bin/docview.exe?Folder=89-74>
- Additional Information: <http://www.uraniumwatch.org/bluecastle.htm>

## ◆ Denison Mines Submits Amended Plan of Operations for La Sal Uranium Mines

On December 18, 2009, Denison Mines Corporation (Denison) submitted a revision to the plan of operations for their uranium mines on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land in La Sal, Utah. The mines are the Pandora Mine and two of the La Sal Complex mines, the Snowball and La Sal. The other La Sal Complex mine, the Beaver Shaft, is on private land. All four of these uranium mines are connected underground. Denison is also the owner of the White Mesa Uranium Mill in San Juan County and other uranium mines in Utah, Colorado, and Arizona.

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The BLM is conducting a completeness review of the proposal. Once the new plan of operations is complete, the BLM will notice post a notice of the initiation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process on their Environmental Notification Bulletin Board: Link to ENBB: <https://www.blm.gov/ut/enbb/index.php>

The previous plans of operations for the mines in La Sal and Environmental Assessments were created in the early 1980s and are very brief and inadequate for the current operations and regulatory standards. The BLM did not evaluate the impacts of the release of radon from the mines, the cumulative impacts, and had little information on which to base an assessment of the long-term impacts to the La Sal area from the operation of the mines.

**◇ Division of Radiation Control Issues Modified Ground Water Discharge Permit for White Mesa Uranium Mill**

The Utah Division of Radiation Control issued the modified Ground Water Discharge Permit to Denison Mines Corporation for the White Mesa Uranium Mill on January 20, 2010. The DRC removed the requirement for a study of the chemical and gas composition and age of groundwater in monitoring wells not covered by the University of Utah Study. That study determined that the increases in contaminate levels in the groundwater were not caused by leakage from the tailings impoundments. The DRC believes that additional study of groundwater isotopic geochemistry is desirable, but concluded that such a study could be deferred to a time when a monitoring well or wells is found to be out of compliance with regulatory standards. Denison has the responsibility to remediate the groundwater if the mill is out of compliance. Also, the DRC did not require Denison to reline the wildlife ponds that have been leaking and mobilizing contaminants in the area.

- Ground Water Discharge Permit, Response to Public Comments, and Related Documents: [http://www.radiationcontrol.utah.gov/Uranium\\_Mills/IUC/groundwaterpmt/index.html](http://www.radiationcontrol.utah.gov/Uranium_Mills/IUC/groundwaterpmt/index.html)

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