44°

Light Rain
Winds Northwest at 3.5 MPH
Pressure 30.10 inches
Dewpoint 44.1° F
Visibility 10.00 miles
Area forecast >
Telluride, San Miguel settle uranium concerns

By Gary Harmon
Friday, October 12, 2012

The company planning to build a uranium mill near Naturita settled with Telluride and San Miguel County in a lawsuit aimed at halting construction of the mill.

“This gets us part of the way there,” Curtis Moore, spokesman for Energy Fuels, said of the agreement, which removes two of four plaintiffs in the case brought originally by the Sheep Mountain Alliance. The alliance is not involved in the settlement.

The agreement with Telluride and San Miguel County requires Energy Fuels to take several actions once the mill is built, ones that Moore said are intended to reassure residents of San Miguel County that they won’t be affected by the mill.

Among the issues included in the settlement:

- Energy Fuels will participate in a monitoring program for the watershed above Telluride;

- New standards and restrictions will be placed on trucks passing through San Miguel County, including requirements that trucks have the company name and are numbered so that authorities can be contacted if spills occur;

- Town and county officials will be allowed to inspect the mill and mines that feed it so any spills can be traced;

- Bonds will be increased from about $12 million to $15 million.

“This will give people the peace of mind that our studies and our plans will indeed not affect the watersheds,” Moore said.

The Telluride Town Council has approved the settlement and the San Miguel County Commission will vote on it next week.

“We support the needs of the families in the West End of Montrose County, as well as protecting all of us from possible hazards from a potential uranium milling operation,” Telluride Mayor Stu Fraser said in a statement. “This solution allows us to move ahead with our lives, feeling secure that appropriate testing is now in place to make sure our air and water will be safeguarded from any potential contamination.”

The settlement doesn’t affect an administrative hearing set to begin next week in Nucla, in which an administrative-law judge will consider whether to reinstate the radioactive-materials-handling license issued by the
Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. A Denver District judge revoked the license this summer and ordered the administrative hearing.

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