

PRESS RELEASE

FEDERAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY ISSUES PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT ON URANIUM MINE CLEAN-UP

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The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has issued a Preliminary Assessment on the clean-up of old uranium mines on the site of the proposed Dewey-Burdock uranium mine. The old mines are named the Darrow, Freezeout, and Triangle mines, and they date from the early days of uranium mining in the Black Hills. The Darrow Pit mine is about one mile square, and research has indicated contamination at the mine for some years. The Institute of Range and the American Mustang (IRAM) requested the assessment in 2012.

The Preliminary Assessment indicated that surface soils, air samples, domestic wells, and surface water in the area contain radioactive materials. The domestic wells are near the site and “contain levels of Radium-226 that exceed the drinking water standard.”

Because the Preliminary Assessment identified concerns, the EPA determined that additional sampling – a Site Investigation – should be done in 2015. A Site Investigation is the next step which could lead to the area being declared a Superfund site under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA). CERCLA is a federal law passed in 1980 to oversee clean-up of the nation’s most toxic sites. Under CERCLA, the EPA looks for the parties who were responsible for creating each toxic site to pay for clean-up of those sites.

“We have pushed for the clean-up of the 169 old uranium mines and prospects in the Cheyenne River watershed before new uranium mining – and more contamination -- are allowed to occur. It just makes sense,” said Lilias Jarding, Ph.D., of the Clean Water Alliance. “This is a

step in the right direction, and we hope the offenders can be identified and the mines cleaned up.”

The Clean Water Alliance is a diverse collection of citizens concerned about the health, environmental, and economic impacts that proposed radioactive mining projects would have on our communities, people, and natural resources. For more information on the Clean Water Alliance, see www.bhcleanwateralliance.org or “Black Hills Clean Water Alliance” on Facebook.