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**Water Protectors and Human Rights Activists Granted Standing to Oppose
the World's Largest Uranium Producer Transnational Corporation: Cameco, Inc.**

PINE RIDGE SD- An Atomic Licensing Board (ALB) judges' panel of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) ruled in favor of petitioners who filed interventions in the 10-year license renewal of Cameco, Inc.'s In Situ Leach (ISL) uranium mine near Crawford, Nebraska. The petitioners include individuals from Nebraska and the Pine Ridge (SD) Indian Reservation; as well as the Oglala Sioux Tribe; the Oglala Delegation of the Black Hills Sioux Nation Treaty Council; the Lakota nongovernmental organization Owe Aku (Bring Back the Way), and the environmental group Western Nebraska Resources Council. "This is a huge victory for us," says Debra White Plume, representing the Pine Ridge based nongovernmental organization Owe Aku, and a member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe.

ISL uranium mining involves massive pumping of oxygenated water into aquifers to dissolve and strip uranium from sandstone particles at the bottom of the aquifer. The process removes most of the uranium and then pumps toxic water back into the aquifer where it can mix with drinking water aquifers, rivers and streams. The mined water is then stored above ground in evaporation ponds or dumped into a deep disposal well under the drinking water aquifer.

On July 28, 2008, thirteen individuals and groups filed to intervene in the license renewal. A petition was also filed in November 2007 to intervene in the North Trend Expansion of the same Crow Butte uranium mine. Plaintiffs oppose the renewal and expansion of the Crow Butte mine's license because of suspected contamination of drinking water sources with Arsenic, Radium, Thorium, and heavy metals due to the mixing of the mined water with community groundwater. Further threats are presented by spills and leaks into the White River, which flows from the ISL mine towards Chadron, NE and Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and which cuts through the land of several of the Petitioners. Plaintiffs said that threats to public health and safety exist due to the faults and fractures that link the mining site and drinking water aquifers and that the license application is missing key information, such as the fact that the Crow Butte mine is wholly-owned by a Canadian corporation and that foreign ownership of the mine is not allowed by the Atomic Energy Act of 1954.

Following the recent Sept 30 hearing, the ALB judges admitted nine contentions including the failure to disclose non-radiological impacts, failure to consult regarding cultural resources, failure to disclose impact on surface waters, including The White River, failure to disclose fractures and faults connecting the mined aquifer and drinking aquifers, failure to disclose that wastes are released on-site, failure to include recent research, failure to account for the value of non-degraded wetlands, and failure to disclose foreign ownership. On the issue of foreign ownership of the mine and the concealment of that fact, the Commission ruled, "its resolution in this proceeding is potentially fatal to Crow Butte's proposed renewal of its license. The Board is of the opinion that it is in the best interest in the management of this proceeding that this issue be segregated from the other contentions and briefed on the merits up front."

David Frankel, attorney for Consolidated Petitioners, says that briefs on the issue of foreign ownership and concealment are due by end of December, with responses in January, and a decision about 30-45 days thereafter. If the Commission rules against the company on the foreign ownership issue they will either lose their license and start 20 years of full time water restoration or sell the mine to a US company.

"I am glad that the court ruled in our favor, I know we still have a lot of work ahead of us in exposing what's been going on at the mine and undoing the damage that the mine has already caused to our water supply. Cameco must take responsibility for the damage that their mine caused, and pay to repair that damage. Here at Pine Ridge, we have widespread Arsenic contamination and a rate of diabetes 800 times the

national average, so it is clear to me that we have to continue to fight to make the water safe for our children and grandchildren,” says White Plume. “This is about the Human Rights of my clients and their future generations to have clean drinking water,” said Bruce Ellison, attorney for White Plume and Owe Aku.

ISL mines owned by Cameco, Inc. in Nebraska, Wyoming, and Canada have all had major spills and leaks and were recently fined for permit violations (\$1.4 mm in WY and \$100,000 in NE). Cameco polluted Lake Ontario from its plant in Port Hope, Ontario which has been discharging Uranium, Arsenic and Radium into Lake Ontario.

Petitioners asserted claims that Cameco does not consider the environmental benefits of the ecosystems that are being damaged. The Board admitted the contention regarding wetland impacts and the economic value of the environmental benefits from those wetlands in a non-degraded condition. “We will appeal aspects of the Board's ruling such as their refusal to admit our contention about the spiritual value of pristine water for traditional Lakota medicines and cultural ceremonies such as the *inipi* (sweat lodge),” says Frankel.

The Petitioners expect Cameco to file for license amendments to expand the current mining area to include another two uranium mines, the Three Crow and the Marsland Expansions, and say they will oppose these two applications as well.

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