



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sat., July 2, 2011

### JULY 16 EVENTS MARK SOLEMN ANNIVERSARIES OF NUCLEAR HISTORY IN NEW MEXICO

*Gallup and Church Rock, N.M.* —The public is invited to two important events Saturday, July 16 to learn more about New Mexico's unique position in the nuclear fuel cycle and acknowledge some of the painful history. July 16 is significant for many reasons including the fact that the nuclear age was ushered in with the world's first atomic detonation at the Trinity Site on July 16, 1945.

The first event, the "Uranium Legacy Remembrance Day" takes place outside of Church Rock at the largest radioactive spill site in U.S. history. "Making Waves," the second event, will be held in the Calvin Hall on the Gallup campus of the University of New Mexico.

"In response to many things including the Las Conchas fire burning on and around the Los Alamos National Laboratory now, the 66<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Trinity Site, the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster in March and the 32<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the Church Rock disaster (which also occurred on July 16), our community is organizing these two important events," says Nadine Padilla, Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment (MASE). "The dangers of all things nuclear are forefront on minds worldwide. I'd like to thank Leona Morgan, Mike Butler, Teddy Nez, Robert Tohe and everyone involved for organizing these events. I hope the public can join us to learn more about these critical issues and help us find ways to protect our land and people from toxic uranium mining."

### URANIUM REMEMBRANCE DAY

Thirty two years ago on July 16, 1979, United Nuclear Corporation's dam broke in what is now known as the Church Rock disaster. More than 93 million gallons of liquid toxic waste were released into the Puerco River in Church Rock, N.M. Thousands of residents live with the lasting effects from this radioactive spill to this day. Teddy Nez and the Red Water Pond Road Association have been working on remediation and healing from this catastrophe since that time.

In light of the renewed interest of uranium mining, the fires around Los Alamos and the recent disaster in Japan, the organizers felt it is especially important to host the event this year. The health effects of past mining and the Church Rock disaster will be remembered for many generations and is something the community is dealing with to this day. There has been no uranium waste clean-up in the past 40 years which impacts all of the areas around the spill including the Coyote Canyon, Standing Rock, Nahodishgish, Pinedale and Church Rock Chapters of the Navajo Nation.

Uranium Remembrance Day will start at 7 a.m. with a prayer at Teddy Nez's home on Red Water Pond Road. People will then march to the site of the spill. Numerous elected officials and community leaders including Senator Lovejoy, Representative Ben Ray Luján and Clancy Tenley from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will be speaking about the health and environmental effects of the uranium.



The first commemorative march took place in 2009 on the 30th Anniversary of the spill. That event ended with a proclamation signing by the President of the Navajo Nation Joe Shirley reinstating the 2005 Diné Natural Resources Protection Act which bans uranium processing on the Navajo Nation.

## MAKING WAVES

“Making Waves,” takes place Saturday, July 16, 5-7 p.m. at Calvin Hall on the UNM Gallup campus and will address the full nuclear fuel cycle and the resulting radioactive contamination. The event is hosted by community leaders and residents from New Mexico and Arizona living near nuclear activities.

“We are organizing this event to educate the public about the dangers of uranium mining and nuclear industry in the Southwest,” says Leona Morgan, co-organizer of the event and the Eastern Navajo Diné Against Uranium Mining Coordinator.

“New Mexico holds an important and unique place in the nuclear fuel cycle,” says Morgan. “Unfortunately the nuclear industry has wreaked havoc on Southwestern communities; from weapons development and storage to uranium mining, milling, enrichment and disposal for more than 60 years. There are hundreds of families in New Mexico who have suffered health and environmental effects from the nuclear cycle and nuclear proliferation.”

New Mexico is home to Los Alamos National Labs, Sandia National Labs, Uranium Enrichment Plant (URENCO), Kirtland Air Force Base (AFB), Holloman AFB, Cannon AFB, the Trinity Site, and the Waste Isolation Pilot Project. In addition, there are numerous active and abandoned uranium mines and mills in all Four Corners states; New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado and Utah

“Making Waves” will include screenings of short films and a panel discussion. Panelists include Robert Tohe from the Sierra Club’s Environmental Justice (EJ) office and Laura Watchempino from the Pueblo of Acoma. Tohe’s department works with tribes and community groups to protect their resources from contamination. Watchempino has worked for her tribe protecting and managing tribal water resources. She served as attorney for Indian Pueblo Legal Services in New Mexico in the 1980s and is currently working on the designation of nuclear free zones to combat the proliferation of the nuclear fuel cycle, from uranium mining and processing to the long-term disposal of the toxic radioactive wastes generated. Watchempino states that every part of the cycle poses dangers to the surrounding water, air, soil, human health and other life forms.

Organizers of these events are currently addressing requests for permits for uranium mining in and around the Grants mineral belt and stand united that they should not be granted in the aftermath of the health and environmental devastation in New Mexico. These groups are committed to see the United States transition from dirty and unsafe energy sources into renewable energy and embrace a clean and safe future. *These events are organized by members of the Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment.* [www.masecoalition.org](http://www.masecoalition.org)

## WHAT: Uranium Remembrance Day

**WHERE:** 29E Red Water Pond Road, (.5 miles west off end of. Rt. 566, 11.5 miles north of Church Rock)

**WHEN:** 7 a.m. Prayer; 8-10 a.m. March to site; 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Program

**INFO:** Teddy Nez, 505-879-2910, [tntnez@yahoo.com](mailto:tntnez@yahoo.com)

## WHAT: Making Waves

**WHERE:** Calvin Hall, University of New Mexico - Gallup 705 Gurley Ave. Gallup, NM 87301

**WHEN:** Saturday, July 16, 2011, 5-7 p.m.

**INFO:** Leona Morgan, 505-870-8547, [leona.morgan@yahoo.com](mailto:leona.morgan@yahoo.com)



**INTERVIEWS AND IMAGES ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**

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