



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Friday, July 15, 2011**

**NM ENVIRONMENT DEPT PUTS MINING COMPANY'S FINANCIAL INTERESTS ABOVE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

*Santa Fe, New Mexico*— The Eastern Navajo Diné Against Uranium Mining (ENDAUM), represented by the New Mexico Environmental Law Center (NMELC), filed a complaint for declaratory and injunctive relief against the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) with the First Judicial Court in Santa Fe this morning. The filing states that the Environment Department has bypassed the normal regulatory processes to benefit Hydro Resources Inc. (HRI) by allowing HRI to conduct mining activities before it made a decision on HRI's discharge permit application.

"This violation of the regulatory process by a government agency that is charged with protecting the public's health and environment is unacceptable and needs to be reversed," says Eric Jantz, staff attorney of the New Mexico Environmental Law Center. "Rather than playing by the rules, the rules are being played."

HRI, a subsidiary of Texas-based Uranium Resources, Inc., proposes to mine uranium in the Navajo communities of Church Rock and Crownpoint. Its mining process would contaminate large areas of groundwater, including the primary drinking water source for approximately 15,000 people in the Eastern Agency of the Navajo Nation. The company stands to significantly benefit financially if the Environment Department's decision stands.

Today's filing states that the New Mexico Environment Department does not have authority to accept HRI's discharge permit application as a permit renewal under the Water Quality Act. The Water Quality Act regulations provide that NMED may issue a discharge permit for no longer than seven years. HRI's permit was originally approved November 2, 1989 and last renewed in 1996, but HRI has failed to renew its permit since then. Even though HRI's permit expired in 2003, NMED still considers HRI to have a valid permit, which would allow it to conduct uranium mining activities at its Section 8 site in Church Rock.

The New Mexico Environmental Law Center has obtained documents through an Inspection of Public Records Act Request that clearly demonstrate that the New Mexico Environment Department willing to bend their own rules to assure that permit applicants' financial needs are met. When the Environment Department took a regulatory position that HRI believed would hurt it financially and complained, the Deputy Environment Secretary personally intervened to change the Department's position without having any basis in law or seeking public input.

NMED governs ground water discharge permits issued pursuant to the New Mexico Water Quality Act. The Department also oversees permitting programs for everything from power plants and mining operations to national laboratories and other industrial operators to ensure state air and water quality standards are maintained and public health is protected.

*The mission of the New Mexico Environmental Law Center is to protect New Mexico's natural environment and communities through legal and policy advocacy, and public education. The New Mexico Environmental Law Center's attorneys have handled over 100 critical cases in low-income and minority communities fighting pollution and environmental degradation. The Law Center charges few, if any, fees to its clients, most of whom are from Hispanic and Native American communities.*

[www.nmenvirolaw.org](http://www.nmenvirolaw.org)

**CONTACT:**

Jennifer Marshall

505-231-1776

[jennifer@jmarshallplan.com](mailto:jennifer@jmarshallplan.com)