



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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NAVAJOS VOW FIGHT AGAINST NEW URANIUM MINES

Santa Fe, New Mexico—For the first time in United States history, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) will be challenged in Federal appeals court for its approval of a source materials license for an *in situ* leach uranium mine.

The Navajo communities of Crownpoint and Church Rock, New Mexico, with the assistance of the New Mexico Environmental Law Center (NMELC), Eastern Navajo Dine against Uranium Mining (ENDAUM) and Southwest Research and Information Center (SRIC) will fight the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and Hydro Resources, Inc., demanding that they stay off of Navajo lands in New Mexico. NMELC will present oral arguments on May 12 to a panel of Federal judges in Denver asking that the NRC decision to allow mining be set aside.



“The importance of our hearing on May 12 cannot be overstated,” states Eric Jantz, New Mexico Environmental Law Center attorney. “We are talking about the land, water, air and health of two whole communities. There are people on this land grazing their cattle and hauling their daily drinking water.”

ENDAUM is the first community group ever to fight the Nuclear Regulatory Commission on a source materials permit for an *in situ* leach uranium mine. This fight is becoming even more significant, as the price of uranium has increased tremendously during the past seven years, rising from \$7/lb to \$68/lb. Subsequently, the state of New Mexico has seen a dramatic rise in the number of exploratory permits requested by mining companies during the past year, with a dozen applications currently under review.

Hydro Resources, Inc. has four proposed mines in the Church Rock-Crownpoint region. In 2006, the NRC approved the license for all four sites. The New Mexico Environmental Law Center filed a lawsuit in 2007 against the NRC to overturn the license. The NMELC argues that the NRC has violated the Atomic Energy Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and its own regulations when it issued decisions on numerous issues. The NMELC's clients are appealing the following points:

- Hydro Resources failed to prove that it will protect groundwater from contamination by uranium and other toxic heavy metals
- The company failed to ensure that the health of residents near the mines would be protected from damaging radioactive air emissions
- Hydro Resources' proposed financial bond for the site is inadequate to ensure that the site(s) would be cleaned up in the event that the company is unable to undertake reclamation of the land and/or water impacted by the mining

Because of the NRC's bias in favor of industry, a victory for NMELC's Navajo clients would set a major precedent in New Mexico.

WHO: New Mexico Environmental Law Center, Eastern Navajo Dine Against Uranium Mining (ENDAUM) and Southwest Research and Information Center (SRIC) oppose the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and Hydro Resources, Inc.

WHAT: Oral arguments regarding the protection of Navajo communities from contamination by uranium of air and water supplies. The New Mexico Environmental Law Center represents ENDAUM and SRIC in their fight against proposed in-situ leach (ISL) uranium mines in the Crownpoint and Church Rock areas. If allowed to proceed, these mines would contaminate the sole source of drinking water for nearly 15,000 people--almost all of whom are Navajo.

WHERE: U.S. Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals, The Byron White U.S. Courthouse, 1823 Stout St., Denver, Colorado.

The territorial jurisdiction of the Tenth Circuit includes the six states of Oklahoma, Kansas, New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, and Utah, plus those portions of the Yellowstone National Park extending into Montana and Idaho.

WHEN: Monday, May 12, 1p.m.

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. The NMELC is celebrating its 20th Anniversary in 2008. Membership and gifts help New Mexico communities protect their natural environment and their health from toxic pollution, the degrading effects of growth, and liabilities created by irresponsible mining. 505-989-9022. www.nmenvirolaw.org

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