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NRC Seeks Public Comment on Environmental Review of Proposed Church Rock Mine Cleanup in New Mexico

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is seeking public comment on the scope of its environmental review of United Nuclear Corp.'s proposed cleanup of the closed Northeast Church Rock Mine in northwestern New Mexico.

United Nuclear, a subsidiary of General Electric, is seeking an amendment to its NRC license that would authorize the transfer of about 1 million cubic yards of contaminated soil, known as "mine spoils," from the North East Church Rock mine to the nearby Church Rock uranium mill site for disposal at the mill's waste facility, called a "tailings impoundment." The mill is located approximately 17 miles northeast of Church Rock, N.M., adjacent to the Navajo Reservation.

In a *Federal Register* [notice](#) published Feb. 8, the NRC announced its intention to prepare an environmental impact statement on the proposed waste transfer. The agency staff is seeking public comments to help define the scope of the environmental review. The *Federal Register* notice gives detailed instructions for submitting comments, which will be accepted through April 19.

The NRC staff intends to conduct public meetings in the Gallup, N.M., area in mid-March to present details on the proposed waste disposal and explain the NRC review process. Details of those meetings will be announced on the NRC website [Public Meetings page](#).

The Church Rock uranium mill operated from 1977 to 1982, processing uranium ore from the Northeast Church Rock Mine under a State of New Mexico license. Since 1988, the mill has been under dual regulatory oversight of the NRC and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, under a Memorandum of Understanding between the two agencies. The NRC is the lead agency regulating surface reclamation and closure activities at the site under an NRC license and the Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act of 1978. The EPA is the lead agency regulating cleanup of the mine.

UNC's proposal to dispose of the mine spoils at the mill site is part of a broader cleanup action approved by the EPA under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability process. Other stakeholders are involved in this action, including the NRC, EPA, the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Energy, and the New Mexico Environment Department.