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**Subject:** FYI-- Media Coverage Report: NECR EE/CA  
**Attachments:** Media Coverage Report NECR EECA.pdf

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
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Here's the media coverage from last week.

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## Media Coverage Report

### North East Church Rock EE/CA Finalization

#### Plan targets highly contaminated mine on Navajo

FELICIA FONSECA, Associated Press

Updated 03:05 p.m., Friday, September 30, 2011

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — The federal government has approved a plan to clean up the most badly contaminated uranium mine site on the Navajo Nation.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced the plan Thursday to remove 1.4 million tons of contaminated soil from the former Northeast Church Rock Mine near Gallup, N.M., at a cost of \$44 million. The mine operated from 1967 to 1982 and has long topped the priority list for cleanup on the vast reservation.

"This is an important milestone in the effort to address the toxic legacy of historic uranium mining on the Navajo Nation," said Jared Blumenfeld, administrator for the EPA's Pacific Southwest Region in San Francisco.

The mine site includes two underground uranium shafts, waste piles, surface ponds and buried waste, contributing to the 4 million tons of uranium ore that was mined from the reservation over four decades. Rain and flash floods have carried the radium-contaminated soil from the mine down an arroyo where children play and livestock graze, and the wind blows it into people's yards.

Clancy Tenley, associate director for tribal programs at the EPA in San Francisco, said the soil will be placed in a lined repository and capped, atop tailings at an adjacent mill site owned by United Nuclear Corp. The EPA is finalizing an agreement with the corporation's parent company, General Electric Co., for the cleanup that will take several years, beginning next summer.

The EPA considered more than a dozen sites to stockpile the waste but said storing it at the mill site also owned by United Nuclear Corp. would be the most cost-effective and could be implemented in a reasonable time frame while protecting human health. Exposure to elevated levels of radium over a long period of time can result in anemia, cataracts and cancer.

"If all goes well, seven years from now the project will be complete," Tenley said.

About 10,000 tons of waste that has higher concentrations of radium will be shipped to Utah for reprocessing or disposal, Tenley said. General Electric said in a letter to the EPA that it didn't believe off-site disposal was necessary, given other waste from other nearby mines could be sent to the repository, dwarfing any potential risk with the more contaminated waste. But General Electric said it would defer to the EPA.

Creating a mound up to 10 feet high that's filled with contaminated waste wasn't the first remedy of choice for the residents or the tribe, who said they would rather see the soil hauled off far from the reservation. But knowing the design phase will take three years and that an Albuquerque, N.M.-based research group that works closely with Navajo uranium issues has been hired as a technical adviser on the project has provided some comfort.

"There's some assurances we got that led us to be supportive of the remedy," said Stephen Etsitty, executive director of the tribe's EPA. "Part of the assurances are that the (Navajo) Nation is going to be heavily involved in the design and engineering as we begin this work."

Larry King, who worked as an underground surveyor at the Northeast Church Rock Mine in the 1970s and early '80s, said he's concerned that the contaminated soil could weigh heavily on the existing mill tailings cells causing the liner to break and groundwater to be spoiled. The EPA said it evaluated the concerns and found that the soil can be placed on the tailings without affecting the groundwater or stability of the tailings.

Still, King said, "It will be in the back of everybody's mind that we can't really spend too much time standing here, because that's where the waste pile was and the radiation."

General Electric has done smaller cleanup projects in the area — demolishing and rebuilding a structure in 2007 and removing 40,000 tons of contaminated soil last year. Nearby residents were temporarily moved during the last cleanup, and Tenley said they will be asked again if they'd like to relocate, either to hotels or by receiving a cash settlement to buy a home.

King said he's not sure he'll be offered alternative housing, but he sounded doubtful he'd take it.

"I have to think about my livestock, my livelihood," said the 54-year-old. "This is where we were raised."

Farmington Daily Times, Albuquerque Journal, KPHO Phoenix (CBS affiliate), KTAR (Phoenix talk radio), Washington Examiner, CT Times Post, Albany Times Union, Houston Chronicle, Sierra Vista Herald, San Antonio Express, KSAZ Phoenix (Fox affiliate), KSWT (Southern AZ CBS affiliate) and The Republic picked up the AP story.

### **Luján Applauds EPA Plan to Cleanup Largest Abandoned Uranium Mine on Navajo Nation**

By Indian Country Today Media Network Staff October 2, 2011

The recent announcement from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) about the approval to clean up the Northeast Church Rock Mine received praise from Congressman Ben Ray Luján.

"The legacy of uranium mining continues to be felt across the Navajo Nation to this day," Congressman Luján said. "The EPA's announcement is welcome news and a critical step in addressing the impact of uranium mining on our communities. The completion of this plan is the result of years of hard work by members of the Navajo Nation and the Red Water Pond Road community, and I look forward to the day when this land is restored."

The mine that sits mostly on Navajo tribal trust land will undergo a series of removal actions to address the contamination of residential yards and lands of the Red Water Pond community according to the EPA [website](#).

The largest mine on the Navajo Nation has been one of the highest priorities for the [tribe](#) and will undergo the removal of around 1.4 million tons of radium and uranium contaminated soil. The mine operated from 1967 to 1982.

<http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2011/10/lujan-applauds-epa-plan-to-cleanup-largest-abandoned-uranium-mine-on-navajo-nation/>



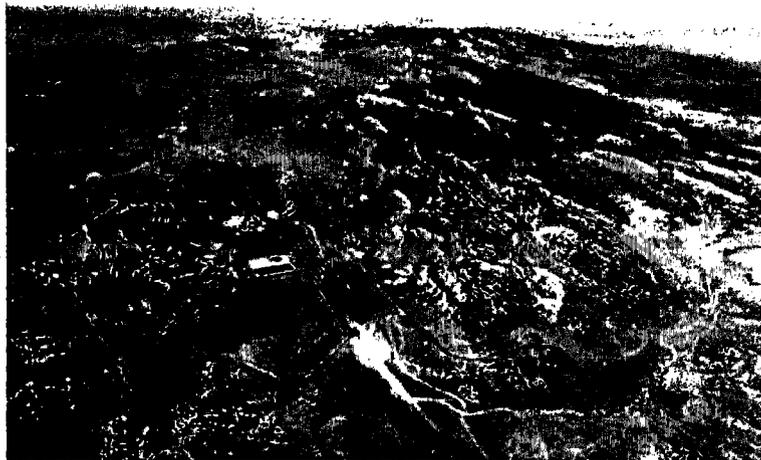
**world nuclear news**

**Cleanup plan for abandoned US mine**

03 October 2011

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has announced a plan to clean up the Northeast Church Rock Mine - the largest and highest priority abandoned uranium mine on Navajo land.

The Northeast Church Rock mine was operated by United Nuclear Corporation as a uranium ore mine between around 1967 and 1982. It included an 1800-foot (550-metre) deep shaft, waste piles and several surface ponds. The mine adjoins a uranium mill site.



*The Northeast Church Rock mine site (Image: United Nuclear Corp)*

Under EPA oversight and in conjunction with the Navajo Nation's own environmental protection agency, General Electric conducted two previous cleanups at the site to deal with residual

contamination, including the removal and rebuilding of one building in 2007, and the removal of over 40,000 tonnes of contaminated soil in 2010.

The latest cleanup effort will involve the removal of some 1.4 million tonnes of radium- and uranium-contaminated soil, which will be placed in a lined, capped facility. The multi-year cleanup - which will be conducted in several phases - will allow unrestricted surface use of the mine site for grazing and housing.

New Mexico environment secretary David Martin said, "Consolidating the waste into one repository will return the land to the Navajo Nation for their traditional use." He added, "The cleanup will also ensure long-term stewardship to protect public health and the environment."

Ben Shelly, president of the Navajo Nation, commented: "A perfect remedy is difficult to design, and in this case every stakeholder can be proud of their input into the remedy. I look forward to the cleanup and putting people to work restoring our lands."

The Navajo Nation is a semi-autonomous Native American-governed territory covering over 27,000 square miles (71,000 km<sup>2</sup>), occupying all of north-eastern Arizona, the south-eastern portion of Utah, and north-western New Mexico. It is the largest land area assigned primarily to a Native American jurisdiction within the USA.

Between 1944 and 1986, nearly four million tonnes of uranium ore were mined from Navajo land under leases with the Navajo Nation. Over 500 abandoned uranium mines now exist on the land. Since 1994, the EPA's Superfund Program has provided technical assistance and funding to assess potentially contaminated sites and develop a response. At the request of the US House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, in October 2007 the EPA developed a coordinated five-year plan to address uranium contamination in consultation with Navajo Nation EPA.

*Researched and written by World Nuclear News*

[http://www.world-nuclear-news.org/ENF-Cleanup\\_plan\\_for\\_abandoned\\_US\\_mine-0310115.html](http://www.world-nuclear-news.org/ENF-Cleanup_plan_for_abandoned_US_mine-0310115.html)



## **Largest abandoned uranium mine cleanup on Navajo Nation announced**

*An important milestone in the effort to clean up of Navajo trust lands contaminated by historic uranium mining will be achieved in the cleanup of the Northeast Church Rock Mine in New Mexico.*

Author: Dorothy Kosich

Posted: Friday , 30 Sep 2011

RENO, NV -

The U.S. EPA announced Thursday it has approved a plan to clean up 1.4 million tons of radium and uranium contaminated soil at the Northeast Church Rock Mine, the largest and highest priority uranium mine on the Navajo Nation.

Northeast Church Rock mine operated as a uranium ore mine from 1967 to 1992.

Under EPA oversight and in conjunction with the Navajo Nation EPA, General Electric conducted two prior cleanups at the site to deal with residual contamination, including the removal and reconstruction of one building in 2007 and removal of 40,000 tons of contaminated soil in 2010.

The new approved plan is based on six years of work and more than 10 public meetings with the local community, the Navajo Nation and others. During the public meetings, residents expressed concern that the disposal of mine waste with nearby United Nuclear Corporation Mill site tailings could cause groundwater contamination, uneven settling of the tailings, or other problems with the current impoundment.

The multiyear cleanup will be conducted in several phases. Design of the disposal facility will take place over a three-year period. Construction of final mine site cleanup will be completed by 2018. The cleanup will place the contaminated soil in a lined, capped facility.

"Consolidating the waste into one repository will return the land to the Navajo Nation for their traditional use," said David Martin, New Mexico environmental secretary. "The cleanup will also endure long term stewardship to protect public health and the endowment."

"This is an important milestone in the effort to address the toxic legacy of historic uranium mining on the Navajo Nation," said Jared Blumenfeld, administrator of EPA's Pacific Southwest Region.

The cleanup plan will provide unlimited surface use of the mine site after cleanup; send waste containing high levels of radium or uranium off-site for reprocessing or approved disposal; cleanup the contaminated drainage area east of Red Water Pond Road; provide voluntary housing options during the cleanup for community members living near the mine; provide job training and employment during the cleanup; and use the most stringent uranium mine cleanup standard in the country.

Mill site owner United Nuclear Corporation/General Electric has agreed to: hire locally through a Navajo hiring preference; provide a scholarship program for Navajo students to attend universities; improve Pipeline Canyon Road near the area of the mine and mill sites; and provide building materials for ceremonial hogans requested by the Red Water Pond Road community residents.

<http://www.mineweb.com/mineweb/view/mineweb/en/page72103?oid=136554&sn=Detail&pid=1020>  
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## **EPA announces plan to clean up largest abandoned uranium mine on the Navajo Nation**

30 September 2011, Native Times.com, EPA Release

SAN FRANCISCO – Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced it has approved a plan and committed to clean up the Northeast Church Rock Mine, the largest and highest priority uranium

mine on the Navajo Nation.

The cleanup will include removal of approximately 1.4 million tons of radium and uranium contaminated soil and will employ the most stringent standards in the country. The cleanup will place the contaminated soil in a lined, capped facility. The multi-year cleanup will be conducted in several phases.

"This is an important milestone in the effort to address the toxic legacy of historic uranium mining on the Navajo Nation," said Jared Blumenfeld, Administrator for the Pacific Southwest Region. "This plan is the result of several years of collaboration between EPA, the Navajo Nation, and the Red Water Pond Road community living near the mine."

"On behalf of the Navajo Nation, I appreciate the efforts of the US EPA and Navajo EPA, and the cooperation from the state of New Mexico to clean up contaminated Navajo trust lands," said Ben Shelly, President of the Navajo Nation. "A perfect remedy is difficult to design, and in this case every stakeholder can be proud of their input into the remedy. I look forward to the cleanup and putting people to work restoring our lands."

The disposal cell will be designed with participation from the Navajo Nation, State of New Mexico, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and Department of Energy. EPA will fund an independent technical advisor to aid the community in their understanding of the project as it develops and facilitate local input into the design process. The cleanup will allow unrestricted surface use of the mine site for grazing and housing.

"Consolidating the waste into one repository will return the land to the Navajo Nation for their traditional use," said David Martin, New Mexico Environment Secretary. "The cleanup will also ensure long term stewardship to protect public health and the environment."

Northeast Church Rock mine operated as a uranium ore mine from approximately 1967 to 1982, and included an 1800-foot deep shaft, waste piles, and several surface ponds. Under EPA oversight and in conjunction with the Navajo Nation EPA, General Electric conducted two previous cleanups at the site to deal with residual contamination, including the removal and rebuilding of one building in 2007, and removal of over 40,000 tons of contaminated soil in 2010.

Exposure to elevated levels of radium over a long period of time can result in anemia, cataracts, and cancer, especially bone cancer.

EPA's work with Navajo Nation to identify and enforce against responsible parties is part of a 5-year plan to address the problem, which can be found at <http://www.epa.gov/region9/superfund/navajo-nation/>

<http://nativetimes.com/news/environment/6106-epa-announces-plan-to-clean-up-largest-abandoned-uranium-mine-on-the-navajo-nation>