

From: Linda Richards <atomiclinda@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 27, 2021 10:29 PM
To: UNC-ChurchRockEIS Resource
Subject: [External_Sender] Comment to NRC

Unfortunately, it is many indigenous communities that bear the weight of the disproportionate harm caused by nuclear pollution, at every step of the nuclear fuel chain, including the mining, milling, production of nuclear materials, testing and storage of wastes. I research nuclear history, so I have seen this damage with my own eyes, from the murky yellow ponds to the tailings piles at Shiprock to the Churchrock accident disaster site. I have heard the stories from the Hopi, Pueblo and Dine elders and widows of uranium miners suffering way back in 1986. How the people were treated must be atoned for with right actions for repair in the present and the future.

I know what the Navajo asked for in the beginning: removal of all the polluted wastes. They repeat it and repeat it. The record shows back to the Waxman hearings this cleanup was intended to meet the needs of the Navajo, to meet their spiritual, mental and physical needs for none of the contamination to remain--- but instead, the same country whose scientists can travel to Mars--- say it is too expensive. Your priorities must be re-evaluated and indigenous people's leadership on how to live sustainably respected and learned from.

The conduct of the NRC and the EPA toward this unwanted pollution can be seen as a violation of sovereignty and human rights. This neglect is out of alignment with the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The US support for the Treaty as detailed here, and I draw your attention to page 6 of this document <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/154782.pdf>

Nuclear pollution has, in particular, adversely impacted The Red Pond Community and they have been exposed to toxic mine wastes since 1969.

Since 2006, their group has advocated that uranium mine wastes be removed from our community to a licensed, offsite disposal facility to repair and restore our lands and health.

Why is this simple, straightforward request still not honored by the US decision-makers, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) for the last 15 years, despite numerous attempts to be heard in public meetings and hearings?

SEPA and NRC both propose to move 1 million cubic yards of wastes at the NECR Mine to the top of the mill tailings pile, which is unlined and subject to potential effects of flash floods in the Pipeline Arroyo.

This is a travesty to be so disrespected and endangered by public policy that allows this long lived and dangerous pollution to fester.

USEPA MUST honor sovereignty and the requests of President Nez and Vice President Lizer in a letter to NRC dated April 12, 2021. They stated, "the Navajo Nation remains steadfast in its position that all NECR radioactive mine waste registering above USEPA's action level should be removed from the community."

Take responsibility and remove the Quivira Mine wastes! We want to see the Navajo Nation lead a multi-stakeholder effort to find suitable sites for the permanent disposal of uranium mines outside of the Navajo Nation.

I have been watching this whole debacle and from the beginning the Navajo asked, please take this dangerous debris away. Why does it still stay?

I want to see the Health, Education and Human Services Committee support this position and work with the Office of the President and Vice President to protect the health, lands and water of the Navajo people for generations to come by consolidating mine wastes in a few safe, monitored locations outside of the Navajo Nation.

In addition, this community has made clear requests that 1) the NRC must withdraw the DEIS from further consideration and instead start a process led by the people themselves in cooperation with impacted communities, Navajo Nation agencies and find acceptable AUM disposal sites to the Navajo Nation that are outside its sacred boundaries and not immediately adjacent to the Navajo Nation homelands.

2) The NRC must deny GE's application to amend its license to allow for consolidation of NECRM waste on UNC mill tailings.

3) All parties responsible for the NECRM waste should collectively relocate the Red Water Pond Community to a culturally appropriate location of the community's choosing.

Listen.

Thank you, Dr. Linda Marie Richards

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