



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

September 14, 2021

VIA EMAIL ONLY

Ms. Valinda Shirley
Executive Director
Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency
P.O. Box 339
Window Rock, Arizona 86515
valinda.shirley@navajo-nsn.gov

SUBJECT: STATUS UPDATE OF CHURCH ROCK MILL SITE LICENSE AMENDMENT
AND DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT OUTREACH
ACTIVITIES

Dear Ms. Shirley:

At the request of your staff, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is providing an explanation of our decision not to hold in person events in the Gallup, New Mexico area. This letter also provides an update on our outreach efforts during the extended comment period on the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) for the Church Rock Mill Site license amendment request. The NRC issued its DEIS in November 2020 and is collecting comments until November 1, 2021.

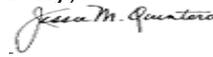
The NRC staff had planned to hold an open house on September 1 at the Gallup Community Service Center. The NRC staff also had offered to meet with local Navajo Chapters in person during the same week. We are sorry that, ultimately, we could not justify holding the public open house on September 1 or individual meetings with the Chapters because of current Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) conditions. We sent emails notifying the local Navajo Chapters and other groups of our decision, noting the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's guidance for areas with high COVID-19 community transmission rates, such as in McKinley County, as well as Navajo Nation Department of Health orders and advisories. At this time, the NRC does not expect to be able to travel to New Mexico during the DEIS comment period; however, the NRC will continue to monitor local conditions. As described in more detail in the enclosure, we have offered to hold meetings by telephone or online with local Navajo communities. We have also continued to provide information to the community through radio, newspaper, and printed material.

The NRC staff continue to meet with your staff bi-weekly to discuss the status of the environmental review and our outreach activities. We are appreciative of their time for these meetings, their insights on how best to engage with the Navajo community, their support in delivering printed materials, and their assistance in organizing and participating in calls and meetings with Navajo community members.

The NRC will continue to accept comments on the DEIS through November 1, 2021 via toll-free telephone voicemail, email, postal mail, and online at www.regulations.gov. Methods to provide comments are also described on our project webpage at <https://www.nrc.gov/info-finder/decommissioning/uranium/united-nuclear-corporation/meetings.html>.

Should your staff have further questions regarding the NRC's environmental review, they may contact Ms. Ashley Waldron by email at Ashley.Waldron@nrc.gov or by phone at (301) 415-7317. If you would like to speak with me directly, you may reach me by email at Jessie.Quintero@nrc.gov or by phone at (301) 415-7476. If you are interested in speaking with our Division Director, John Tappert, he is also available to meet as described in his August 10, 2021 correspondence (Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) Accession No. ML21231A049). He can be reached by email at John.Tappert@nrc.gov or by phone at (301) 415-2486.

Sincerely,



Signed by Quintero, Jessie
on 09/14/21

Jessie M. Quintero, Chief
Environmental Review Materials Branch
Division of Rulemaking, Environmental,
and Financial Support
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

Docket No. 040-8907
License No. SUA-1475

Enclosures:

1. Summary of U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Outreach During Public Comment Period
2. Newspaper Insert (ML21244A492)

cc:

Dariel Yazzie, NNEPA darielyazzie@navajo-nsn.gov
Lee Anna Martinez, NNEPA lamartinez@navajo-nsn.gov

Summary of U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Outreach During Public Comment Period

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) issued the draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for public comment in November 2020. Since that time, the NRC has conducted outreach with the public while faced with the challenges of the public health emergency, which has not allowed for face-to-face interactions. These challenges have been compounded by the local communities' limited cellular and internet services.

Below is a summary of the efforts the NRC staff have made since the beginning of the comment period to engage the local community. We appreciate the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency (NNEPA) staff's helpful suggestions and feedback in identifying many of these activities.

The information below was provided in our letter to President Nez on June 28, 2021 (<https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML2117/ML21174A199.pdf>). Additional outreach efforts conducted since June of 2021 are in bold.

Public Meetings

The NRC held three public meetings on December 2 and 9, 2020 and April 29, 2021 via webinar and land-line telephone (toll-free). The meeting on April 29, 2021 was held in the evening, from 6 PM to 9 PM Mountain Time to accommodate people who work during the day. Transcripts, audio recordings, and presentation materials for all three of our public meetings can be accessed on our project webpage: <https://www.nrc.gov/info-finder/decommissioning/uranium/united-nuclear-corporation/meetings.html>

Radio Broadcasts

The NRC staff prepared three scripts for radio broadcast that describe the history of the Church Rock mine and mill sites, the DEIS, and the NRC staff's safety evaluation.

These pre-recorded broadcasts were aired several times in April and May on the KTTN and KGAK radio stations in English and in the Navajo language. **The broadcasts were also aired on these stations in June, July, and August, and will be aired in September.** The broadcasts are available through links on our webpage (see link above) or on YouTube at: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLBpOUiOs1fJY_FDcFZFSHFgm2w4AG6Yj-.

Newspaper Ads

NRC has published multiple newspaper ads during the comment period. We published half and full-page ads in the Gallup Independent to describe the project, the DEIS and explain how to provide comments in May 2021.

The NRC staff sought to inform the Navajo communities of the comment period extensions and all the scheduled meetings and broadcasts. The NRC published ads on local radio stations and in local newspapers and sent alerts and fliers via email, in addition to notifying the community during prescheduled periodic phone calls.

The NRC published an 8-page insert in the Navajo Times and Gallup Independent in August and will publish this insert again in September 2021. See Enclosure 2.

Targeted Outreach with the Red Water Pond Road Community

The NRC staff also conducted targeted outreach with the Red Water Pond Road (RWPR) community, which would be most impacted by the proposed action. The staff held telephone calls with interested community members to engage on an individual level and also offered to have small group calls. During these calls, the NRC staff explained the proposal and the NRC's role, answered questions, and listened to the participants' concerns and comments. The NRC staff continues to participate and be available to answer questions in monthly calls with the RWPR community hosted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S EPA). The NRC staff has been participating in these monthly calls since summer 2020.

Targeted Outreach with the Pipeline Road Community

The NRC staff worked with NNEPA staff to organize an online meeting with the Pipeline Road Community on September 1. We appreciate NNEPA staff efforts to coordinate this meeting and ensure the community members were able to participate. In particular, we appreciate Ms. Martinez-Silversmith's efforts on coordinating this meeting.

Targeted Outreach with Local Navajo Chapters

The NRC staff has offered and will continue to offer online or telephone meetings with local Chapter Houses, in particular the Standing Rock, Pinedale, Churchrock, and Coyote Canyon chapters. At the time of this letter, Standing Rock and Pinedale chapters had expressed interest in meeting. The NRC staff will continue to reach out and coordinate with NNEPA staff to hold these meetings.

Hardcopy Materials

Since November 2020, the NRC staff has sent out over 100 paper copies each of several documents to be distributed within the local communities or provided as handouts. We sent copies to a community point of contact, as well as to NNEPA staff, the Gallup community center, and to the Octavia Fellin Public Library. Depending on the need at the time, we sent copies of the DEIS, the Reader's Guide (a summary document of the DEIS), public meeting presentation materials, the NRC staff's safety evaluation, and radio broadcast scripts.

Most recently, we sent copies to NNEPA offices and to the Gallup community center to be provided as handouts during the September 1 meeting with the Pipeline Road community.

For public members interested in documents referenced in the DEIS, there are several ways to access those documents:

- NRC’s online reading room (ADAMS) at <https://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html> and search using the Accession Number
- Call the NRC’s Public Document Room at 1-800-397-4209, or
- Call or email the NRC project manager, Ashley Waldron, at Ashley.Waldron@nrc.gov or at 301-415-7317.

DEIS Comments from Navajo Organizations

We appreciate the comments on the DEIS we have received from the community and other Navajo Nation groups. The table below highlights comment submittals from Navajo Nation organizations thus far, in addition to comments received during the public meetings.

Organization	Link to Comments	Date Submitted
Red Water Pond Road Community	https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML2113/ML21139A251.pdf	May 19, 2021
	https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML2114/ML21147A572.pdf	May 27, 2021
Dine Uranium Remediation Advisory Commission	https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML2114/ML21147A550.pdf	May 27, 2021
NNEPA	https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML2114/ML21147A554.pdf	May 27, 2021
Navajo Nation Becenti Chapter	https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML2114/ML21147A001.pdf	May 26, 2021
Bureau of Indian Affairs (Navajo Region)	https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML2116/ML21165A131.pdf	June 11, 2021

Communications with Navajo Nation Leadership

During the DEIS comment period, the NRC has received correspondence from the Navajo Nation President, Mr. Jonathan Nez. Below is a summary of the letters the NRC has received and our responses to those letters.

Correspondence	Link to Correspondence in ADAMS	Date
Letter from President Nez requesting	https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML2035/ML20357B084.pdf	December 21, 2020

extension for DEIS comment period		
NRC Response to President Nez's December 21 letter	https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML2102/ML21027A421.pdf	January 28, 2021
Letter from President Nez providing comments on the DEIS	https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML2111/ML21111A360.pdf	April 12, 2021
NRC Response to President Nez's April 12 letter	https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML2113/ML21137A138.pdf	May 18, 2021
Letter from President Nez requesting a second extension to DEIS comment period	https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML2115/ML21152A051.pdf	May 26, 2021
NRC Response to President Nez's May 26 letter	https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML2117/ML21174A199.pdf	June 28, 2021

In addition, the U.S. EPA sent a letter, dated August 20, 2021, to President Nez in response to NNEPA's comments on the NRC's DEIS, to provide clarifying information that pertained to U.S. EPA's jurisdiction.