

PUBLIC SUBMISSION

SUNSI Review Complete
Template = ADM-013
E-RIDS=ADM-03
ADD: Antoinette Walker-
Smith, Ashley Waldron

COMMENT (2)
PUBLICATION DATE:
2/26/2019
CITATION 84 FR 6175

As of: 4/23/19 3:20 PM Received: April 19, 2019 Status: Pending_Post Tracking No. 1k3-99fw-e6q7 Comments Due: April 19, 2019 Submission Type: Web
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Docket: NRC-2019-0026
UNC Church Rock

Comment On: NRC-2019-0026-0001
United Nuclear Corporation (UNC) Church Rock Project

Document: NRC-2019-0026-DRAFT-0002
Comment on FR Doc # 2019-01642

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General Comment

To The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission:

On March 19 and 21, 2019 the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) held two Public Environmental Scoping Meetings for the proposal to dispose of the Northeast Church Rock (NECR) mine waste and received public comments from the citizenry of Gallup and surrounding Navajo communities.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) is working with the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency (NNEPA) to oversee cleanup work being done by the United Nuclear Corporation (UNC), a company owned by General Electric (GE).

The United Nuclear Corporation had no representation at both meetings and therefore did not provide any input or answer any questions the audience may have had for them although there were former UNC mine workers who shared their experiences as employees.

The verbal input was from former uranium workers, health experts, technical support, Navajo medicine people and activists with all of the comments indicating more community outreach was needed before anything begins. Not one person spoke in favor of the NRC's plan. Clearly, the urgent need for comprehensive outreach is in the Din (Navajo) language translators and interpreters who can explain the process to those who require this for their understanding and informed consent.

The cost of including translators and interpreters for those who require it must be covered by the U.S. governmental entities (NRC and USEPA) as a part of the U.S. governments Trust Responsibility that is in the Treaty of 1868 regarding the Navajo publics health and safety, especially in regards to the air borne particulates that will be disturbed by the cleanup activities.

Some technical words in the English language cannot be correctly translated into the Din (Navajo) language or interpreted by the medicine people. There are the sacred sites that are in the vicinity that will also be impacted by the activity of the USEPA and UNC that must be addressed with due diligence as well. Medicine and food plants, archeological sites, burial sites or any other sites that have a significant effect on the human environment and health of the communities impacted if disturbed or destroyed as a direct result of the stated activities.

There were no official representatives from the City of Gallup (RESOLUTION #R2018-27--Submitted for the Record) and McKinley County (Resolution No. OCT-18-069)Submitted for the Record) although there are resolutions from both entities that prohibit the transportation of high-level radioactive waste through the city and county.

The Navajo Nation also has a Resolution CAP-18-05 The Din Natural Resources Protection Act of 2005 that states in D. Remediation shall mean the permanent closure of uranium mining and processing site waste piles and associated buildings for the purposes of eliminating or substantially reducing releases of radioactive and toxic substances in the air, land and water in such ways as to prevent or substantially minimize human exposure to such substances now and for future generations.

To date, the laws of the United States have been circumvented by the lack of adequate response and the intent has never been fulfilled under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980, the National Environmental Protection Act of 1970. This is unacceptable and must be addressed thoroughly. The Din Fundamental Law and Natural Law must be incorporated into the Draft Environmental Impact Statement process which requires the participation of the Navajo Nation government.

One individual from the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency spoke gave his comments in both Navajo and English, a much needed aspect since most of the UNC activities will directly impact the Navajo citizens that live near the waste materials and will have to move before any actions begins.

The lack of outreach by the NRC demonstrates a faulty understanding of the Navajo communities and way of life that surround the area that is proposed for cleanup. An environmental assessment of the outlying communities and isolated home sites is urgently needed which will require a thorough census of each household. This would require an extensive door-to-door operation to determine the correct census on all family members including those that are away in school, for employment or other efforts to provide for themselves and their family.

The cost to move every family was not cited by the NRC (EPA or UNC) that would make the families that voluntarily move from their present home site whole; the cost would also include their animals, property and the total amount if their homes are placed in jeopardy.

The two meetings held in Gallup (NM) demonstrated this fact as there were many in attendance that provided their input as well as the community of Red Water Pond Road that is in the immediate vicinity of the 1,000,000 cubic yards of waste that remains there today40 years later.