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**U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Disposal of Mine  
Waste at the United Nuclear Corporation Mill Site**

**Public Comment Meetings**

**Wednesday, December 9, 2020 –  
4:00 PM (ET) 2:00 PM (MT)**

**Event address:**

<https://usnrc.webex.com>

Event number: 199 047 2797

Event passcode: UNCDEIS

**Telephone Access**

**Toll-free** phone number: 1-888-454-7496

Passcode: 7838183

# **Public Comment Meeting on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Disposal of Mine Waste at the United Nuclear Corporation Mill Site**

December 9, 2020

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# Opening Remarks

John Tappert, Director  
Division of Rulemaking, Environmental and  
Financial Support

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## Meeting Overview

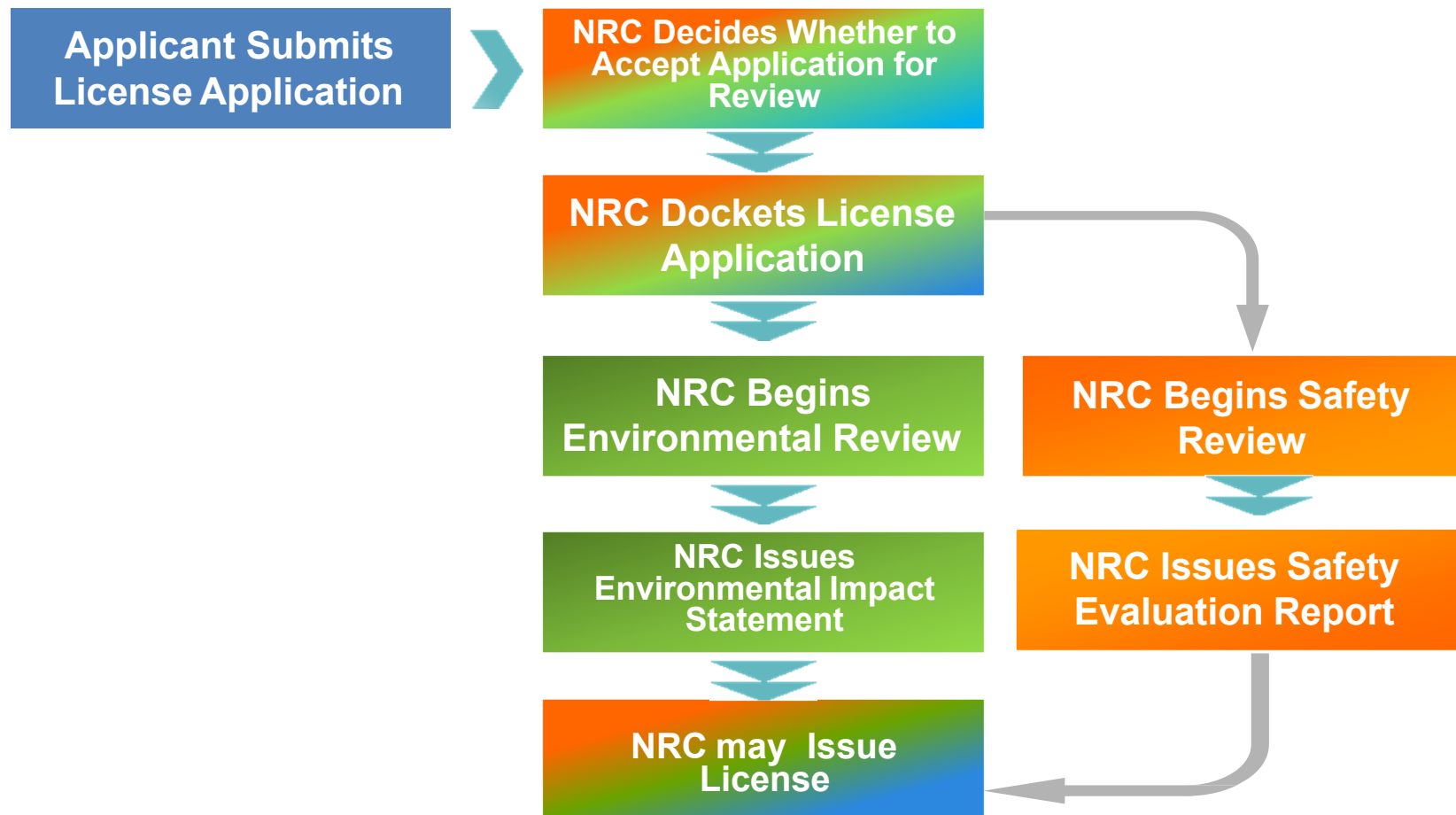
- NRC's Review Process
- NRC Role in Cleanup
- Overview UNC's License Amendment Application
- NRC's Environmental Review Results
- Information Resources and Ways to Comment
- Public Comments

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## **Purpose of the Meeting**

To receive comments  
on the Draft  
Environmental Impact  
Statement for the  
UNC Mill Site License  
Amendment  
Application

# NRC's Review Process



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# NRC's Role in EPA Clean-up Action

- NRC jurisdiction at the UNC mill site
- EPA (R9) lead for clean up at NECR mine
- NRC/EPA (R6) Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)
  - Coordination of the groundwater cleanup at the UNC mill site
- NRC needs to make decision on this action in order for EPA to proceed with CERCLA process

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# Interactions with Navajo Nation

- Recognize EPA has been working with the Navajo Nation for several years on this clean up action
- NRC has coordinated on development of EIS with the Navajo Nation
  - Navajo suggested mitigation measures (Chapter 6)
- Continued coordination efforts through completion of NRC's licensing action



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# License Amendment Application

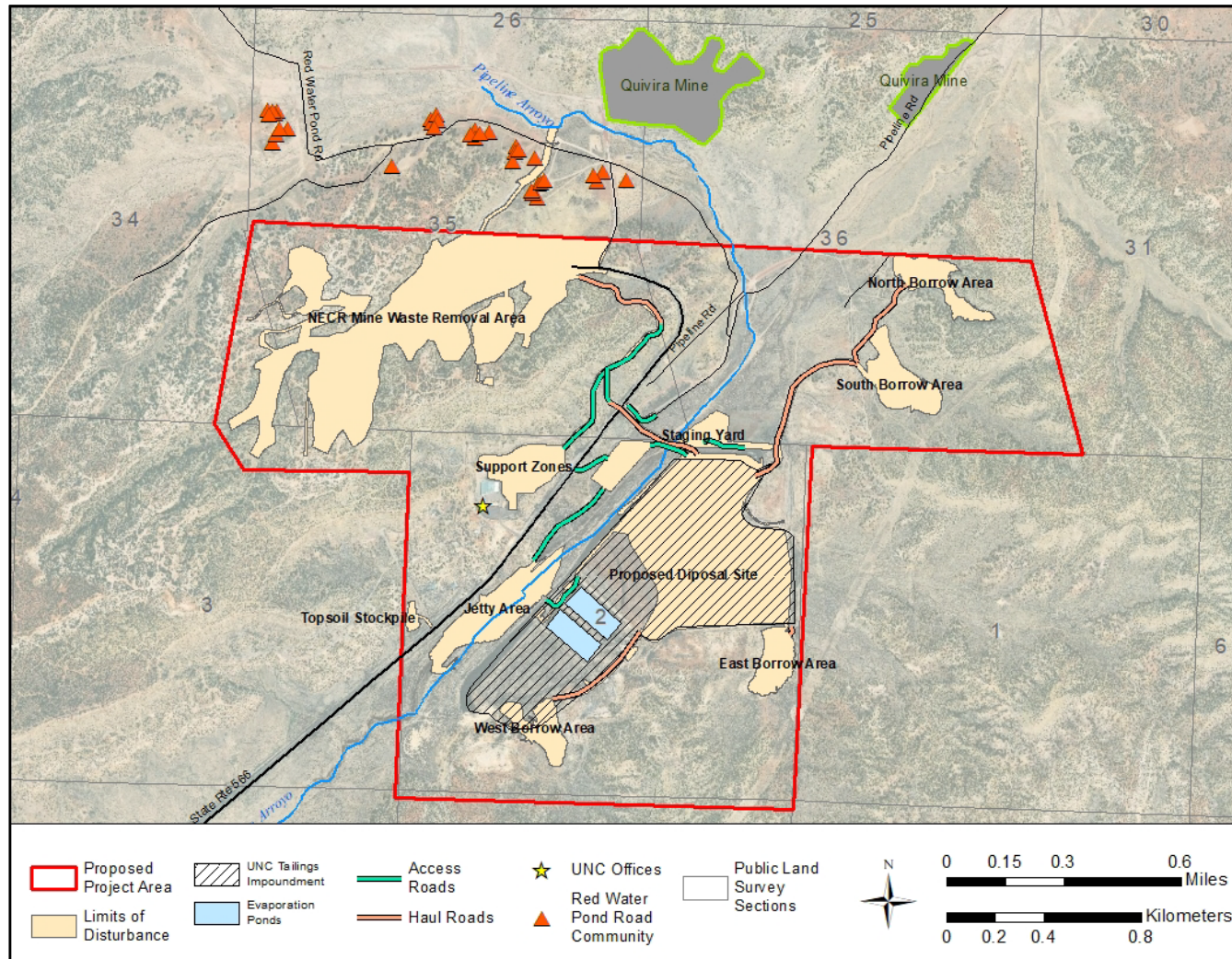
- United Nuclear Corporation (UNC)/General Electric (GE) seeking to amend its NRC Source Material License (SUA-1475) for the UNC mill site
- If approved, would allow UNC/GE to transfer approximately 1,000,000 cubic yards of mine waste from the North East Church Rock mine site to the existing tailings impoundment at the mill site

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# NECR Waste

- Waste consists of soil, waste rock, mine debris, and vegetation
- Waste from the mine site contains varying levels of radioactivity
- Segregating of waste will occur ensuring higher radioactivity is not disposed of at the UNC mill site
- Principal threat waste (PTW) defined by the EPA as exceeding 200 picocuries/gram of Radium-226
  - PTW would not be disposed of at mill site (not part of NRC's action)
  - Location of disposal for this waste has not been decided
  - EPA-approved off-site disposal facility

# Project Location



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# EIS Phases

- EIS evaluates impacts of three phases of the project
  - Construction
    - Surface disturbing activities, including excavation
  - Transfer
    - Loading and transport of waste from mine to mill
  - Closure
    - Reclamation and revegetation of disturbed areas including the evapotranspiration (ET) cover

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# Proposed Action and Alternatives

- Proposed action
- No-action alternative
  - NRC would not approve the license amendment request
- Secondary alternatives
  - Conveyor system instead of hauling waste via truck
  - Cover material from Jetty Area instead of the borrow areas

# Results of NRC's Environmental Review

RESOURCE	IMPACT EVALUATION
Land Use	SMALL
Transportation	SMALL TO MODERATE
Geology and Soils	SMALL
Surface Water	SMALL TO MODERATE
Groundwater	SMALL
Ecology	SMALL (wildlife) SMALL TO MODERATE (vegetation)
Air Quality	SMALL (greenhouse gases) SMALL TO MODERATE (nongreenhouse gases)

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT LEVELS

**SMALL** – Environmental effects are not detectable or are so minor that they will neither destabilize nor noticeably alter any important attribute of the resource.

**MODERATE** – Environmental effects are sufficient to alter noticeably, but not to destabilize, important attributes of the resource.

**LARGE** – Environmental effects are clearly noticeable and are sufficient to destabilize important attributes of the resource.

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# Results of NRC's Environmental Review

RESOURCE	IMPACT EVALUATION
Noise	MODERATE
Historic and Cultural	SMALL to LARGE
Visual and Scenic	MODERATE
Socioeconomic	SMALL
Environmental Justice	Disproportionately high and adverse environmental impacts
Public and Occupational Health	SMALL
Waste Management	SMALL

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# Impact Evaluation

## Environmental Justice

- Historic mill operations
  - Dam failure
  - Groundwater contamination
    - Ongoing corrective action plan
- Closest communities to site are primarily Navajo, who may be impacted by
  - Traffic
  - Dust
  - Noise



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# Impact Evaluation

## Water Resources

- Stormwater runoff and resulting erosion
- Stabilization work in Pipeline Arroyo (Jetty Area) to address potential future undercutting near existing tailings impoundment
- Improvements to stormwater drainage in existing drainage channel
- Groundwater Corrective Action Plan is ongoing and will continue

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# Impact Evaluation

## Historic and Cultural Resources

- 5 sites recommended as eligible for the National Register Historic Places
- Developing a programmatic agreement in coordination with EPA, Navajo Nation, and the New Mexico Historic Preservation Office

## Ecological Resources

- No threatened or endangered species affected

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# Information Resources

- Draft Environmental Impact Statement
  - <https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML2028/ML20289A621.pdf>
- Reader's Guide
  - <https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML2029/ML20295A709.pdf>
- Application material and NRC project website
  - <https://www.nrc.gov/info-finder/decommissioning/uranium/united-nuclear-corporation-unc-.html>

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## SUBMIT COMMENTS BY **FEBRUARY 26, 2021**

- **Oral comments at this meeting**
- **E-mail comments to:**  
[UNC-ChurchRockEIS.resource@nrc.gov](mailto:UNC-ChurchRockEIS.resource@nrc.gov)
- **Leave a (toll-free) voicemail at:** 888-672-3425
- **Federal Rulemaking Web Site:** Go to <https://www.regulations.gov/> and search for Docket ID **NRC-2019-0026**.
- **Mail comments to:** Office of Administration, Mail Stop:TWFN-7-A60M, ATTN: Program Management, Announcements and Editing Staff, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001

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# NRC project contacts

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