

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Uranium Stakeholders Workshop Notes

Wednesday, November 9, 2011

Uranium Permits & Licensing

What can government agencies do?

- To continue to come together and share their expertise in all aspect of mine waste clean-up.
- Do not issue any new Licenses or permits for uranium mines or mills. We have enough mess.

Water

What can government agencies do?

- Contaminated water sources: Need alternative water supplies for communities (water contaminated areas).
- Engage other federal agencies on all surrounding Navajo Nations. (BLM, NPS, USGS, USF&W, ETC) to support integrated physical environmental –ecosystem studies. Use DOI expertise for un-bias integrated resource assessments.

What can I do?

- To be available to provide and assist with action items in a path forward
- Make compliance risk based with use of land/water in mind rather than standards based, for example, why expect groundwater near or under mill site to ever be used for drinking water. Limit future use and impose institutional controls to prevent inappropriate access. Groundwater cleanup metals and rads has rarely if ever been effective at full restoration and I would never trust that kind of water for consumption, alternately water could/should be treated

at point of use or distribution rather than in-situ. The emphasis should be on protection that makes sense, is practical, achievable.

- Research needed to better understand U isotope ratios to help distinguish naturally occurring U in soil and water versus that in contaminated mill tailings, mine waste, etc.
- Interactive Google earth with well & NTUA data so residents can check their water source for humans and livestock.
- Participation

Contaminated Structures

What can government agencies do?

- More funding and staff for NNEPA to evaluate structures
- Better coordination between NNEPA/USEPA contaminated structures program & IHS -> referrals or going to homes together.
- “Structures” in contaminated area go beyond mine structures. Some areas include equipment pieces and junk cars left over from the mining years.
- Provide more funding and resources and continue home radiation survey overall Navajo Nation.

Enforcement

What can government agencies do?

- Go after the responsible parties and get them to clean up their messes and help with infrastructure in the communities affected by those messes (make both a requirement) also, get them to fund epi/health studies!
- Take on greater role in disseminating information of reality in concern with uranium mines issues in Navajo with members of House & Senate. This gesture may result in further research

of impact of uranium exposure, i.e. funds to address all impacts from uranium. Educate Obama's Department Secretary to begin dialogue and collaboration

- Really get together to discuss issues of concern. They have a tendency to stay within their functions, not really discussing issues relevant to Diné.
- Advocate for tribal endeavors at congressional levels – maintain funding.
- Cleanup all the waste – visit statutory regulations, handling, disposal.
- Cleanup groundwater at mill sites – NO institutional control.
- EPA Regional Administrator to receive and review the 1998 underground aquifer designation for HRI/URI to do mining ISL uranium mining in Crownpoint, NM and Churchrock, NM.

What can I do?

- Assist and dissemination of research findings and community & tribal leaders.
- Continue studies on impact, etc.

Abandoned Uranium Mines

What can government agencies do?

- If government agencies do the best job they know how to do, without learning from the Indian people in the process, can the outcome still satisfy the cultural needs and expectations of the Indian people?
- What is going to happen if Navajo AML does not exist any longer; what agency is going to do the work that Navajo AML are doing? U.S. EPA Region 9 or Region 6?
- Lobby for money to:
 - Cleanup remaining uranium mines
 - Produce (media, video, etc.) to create awareness with possible exposure
 - Educate public on issues related to uranium mining.

- Continue collaborations between agencies on all 5-years initiative. The “on the ground” work is vital – active reclamation, restoration, and cleanup. More or higher % of funds should be put on the ground.
- Seek a similar program like UMTRCA to have the federal government pay for the cleanup of the abandoned uranium mines that were used to promote the country’s Manhattan Project during the 1940’s to 1960’s. There should be no difference from the mines that produced the product that was milled.
- Communicate goals and reasonable timeframes with locals.
- Agree on one or more disposal sites for uranium mine waste from the Navajo Nation.
- Improve cooperation and coordination between Abandoned Mine Lands reclamation and EPA remediation.
- Provide clearer integration with Navajo nation counterparts – reduce apparent overlaps that create inefficiencies.
- With limited resources, focus on actions that reduce risk rather than process.
- U.S. EPA/Government agencies can provide more funding/resources to help cleanup uranium mine site cleanups.
- Government agencies need to accelerate work toward contaminated structures remediation/cleanup in the Navajo Nation.
- Engage other Federal agencies (BLM, USGS, USFWS, etc.) to support integrated physical-environmental ecosystem characterization, assessment and monitoring.
- Use DOI expertise for unbiased research and assessment.
- U.S. EPA can continue to help Navajo Nation EPA Superfund be able to take on a greater leadership role in the NAUM investigation and cleanup. Help them to be able to do more NAUM work and enforcement in parallel with EPA to help get more work done overall.
- Post signs at AUM sites.
- Improve coordination and communication with all entities involved with AUM work, (NM, AUM programs, BIA, and BLM).

What can I do?

- Work on environmental issues at local levels – water and land, ensure what is “ok” to use.
- Be involved, continue to be an aware person, so I can relate, pass on information.
- Provide input on AUM rankings.
- I can help and participate in the uranium mine site cleanup process from my capacity.
- I can do community involvement outreach work. I can also advocate for Navajo people and communities on cleanup, the need for safe drinking water and justice.

Other Issues

What can government agencies do?

- Facilitate collaboration on concern(s).
- Be sensitive/respect to cultural/traditional values.
- Offer beneficial options to communities impacted.
- Seek grants, external findings to assist with NN EPA’s effort to continue in assisting in cleanups.
- Provide information (Diné language) video on website.
- Look into previous data from hospitals
- Seek a waiver on confidentiality act from hospitals – just gather specific data on deaths and diagnostics, history tells a lot than collecting data on current events.
- Look & listen to every issue.
- Lobby, meet & cleanup
- Understand and meet the major issues.
- Work together on compensation for everyone affected.
- Learn and work together on the major issues.
- Learn more about the culture of the people and share information.
- Better coordination between agencies.
- Address gaps between agencies.
- Develop realistic, transferable solutions.
- Identify what data is already available and how we can get as much use out of it as possible.

- Continue identifying common goals and focus on those rather than disagreements.
- Take initiative to speak and listen to the quieter members of communities rather than just the squeaky wheels.
- Keep the people (grassroots people) at the fore front of decision-making.
- Be up front with tribal members.
- Provide healthy homes -- what they recommend on their website.
- Government agencies have come a long way in the work of the Five-Year plan. Some government agencies (i.e. BIA & DOE) have not been accountable – this cannot continue because there are environmental problems that are continuing and interim measures should be put in place.
- Coordinate efforts to leverage collective resources and avoid duplication of effort.
- Government agencies should make sure they respect native cultural ways and ceremonies.
- Funding; 5-Year or 10-Year Plan needs more funding
- Partnerships –cross agency lines, share or reassign staff.
- Visibility – more meetings at the Chapter agency level.
- Presentation to the Navajo Nation Council.
- Rules, regulations, bureaucracy are a means to an end not an end in themselves.
- Get rid of organizational charts, start thinking about functional systems and process with ultimate mission and common goals.
- Be more specific about what their limits are so that people don't waste time and energy asking agencies to do something that they legally cannot do. Educate communities/stakeholders about how they can contribute to policy-level changes.

What can I do?

- Work collaboratively with other agency project managers, and seek input of communities and NN agencies.
- Showcase the importance of this work to obtain necessary resources.
- Publicize accomplishments.
- Assist
- Engage local organizations and grassroots groups in distributing information about AUMs.

- Help Navajo EPA build capacity to address the needs of their people.
- Network as best as I can.
- Get to know leadership of impacted communities.
- Listen to the concerned.
- Learn your rules and regulations.
- Do community outreach.
- Listen to others: communities, government.
- Do a community uranium contamination workshop.
- Get a youth group together.

Community Education

What can government agencies do?

- Fund a K-12 curriculum/Navajo specific re: environmental health-uranium & more.
- Engage communities early in the process to get input and feedback.
- Continue to monitor disputed sites for proper cleaning up.
- Coordination of efforts to provide uranium education to affect areas and to people who reside in the area.
- Continue to provide adequate funds for continue clean-up and education.
- Continue to implement Environmental Justice guidance into 5-year Plan.
- Have Nuclear Regulatory Commission sign on to the M.O.U. for the Interagency workgroup for the National Environmental Justice Advisory Committee.
- Share information with Chapters about mines and gather input on how people use land in mining areas. Set priorities for cleanup.
- Work with communities more closely but before doing that, get to know your audience. This way your approach to the community will be more received or accepted.

What can I do?

- Continue to share cultural awareness related to air, water and the land.
- Continue to share information that spurs questions and dialogue among people who live in areas that are affected.
- Become more aware of the topic(s).
- Continue to advocate for community participatory-based research and outreach.
- Incorporate thoughts/ideas from this meeting into our research plans.
- Start asking questions.
- Listen and talk about the issues.
- Learn more about the topic at hand.
- Everyone needs to get involved.
- Be more involved with Navajo communities on uranium (Events, Chapter meetings, listening to elderly, health issues).
- Read on environmental issues.
- We need the DOE & N. Nation to continue working together on the 5-Year plan on disposal sites on Navajo Reservation, especially in Shiprock site; stakeholders are important and the community involvement.
- The Navajo nation needs more funding to maintain the disposal sites, with MOA or MOU with DOE.
- Community outreach to educate the community of Shiprock on disposal sites and its research project with DOE.
- Support the DOE policy of 142 – and the N.N. fundamental law on mill closings/disposal sites.
- Encourage community members to appeal to stakeholders for support and resources.

Health

What can government agencies do?

- Communities requested more information on how uranium has affected their health and what's the status on health studies.

- Provide more resources for a health risk study due to uranium mining.
- Compensate/treat people who are affected due to uranium legacy.
- Soon: Epidemiological study on the children of pre-71 miners and other post-71 miners.
- Continue to provide community listening/sharing sessions to help educate Navajo community about current work and how communities can be involved.
- End the wars. Use the funding in USA.
- Allocate funding to uranium legacy cleanup
- Comprehensive health study.
- Funding communities to do cleanup
- Government agencies can be upfront and transparent about their intentions. A re-enactment of the Havasupai blood fiasco should not be recreated with uranium.
- I learned:
 - Uranium clears the body within 6 days
 - There are no bio-markers
 - There is no strong hard relationship/association with any disease process.
- With a 5-year “study” – what are you really looking for? It seems like the bulk of exposure was to the original miners and their immediate family. Now the threat seems to be by-products of mine tailings.
- If this study fails to make an association with any disease process – will it serve to bolster the other studies that seem to imply that uranium is not the problem?
- In the end – will these studies with no real findings – serve as proof for the Federal government to stop their work with uranium on the reservation because all their “research” studies imply that there is no “lowest” common denominator”.
- “Birth defects” sounds a lot like the “schizophrenia” that the ASU/UA researchers – really researched in the Havasupai Diabetes – Blood Drive.

What can I do?

- Coordinate existing resources at all levels.
- Communication and dialog.
- Integrate across agencies, boundaries.

Written comments on paper posted at registration table November 8-9, 2011

- Need to get alternative water sources to communities ASAP first!!!!
- Need \$\$\$ with plan
- Stakeholders are important to each community on N.N. Disposal sites at Shiprock to continue the L.T.S.P.
- Five-Year Plan? Need 20-Year Plan – that’s how extensive problems are!
- Several agencies/entities shared a Five-Year Plan of their own – but I did not get the chance to evaluate the common thread between them.
- 5-Year plan needs to be extended to a number of years required to cleanup all the mines.
- Thank you for this very accessible (free) conference.