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Roca Honda Resources Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)

Jun 5, 2013

Forest Supervisor  
2113 Osuna Rd. NE  
Albuquerque, NM 87112

Dear Supervisor,

I urge you to select Alternative 1, "No Action", as I oppose the development of a new uranium mine in the Mt Taylor Traditional Cultural Property.

Roca Honda is proposing to pump and use millions of gallons of water a day to operate this mine. This water will be pumped from the underground aquifer that local communities will rely on in the future.

Many people, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, recognize the cultural value of Mt. Taylor. Mount Taylor was permanently listed in the State Register of Cultural Properties by the Cultural Properties Review Committee by final order on September 14, 2009. It is central to oral history stories and ceremonies, and it plays a vital role in cosmology and religious practices. Shrines, pilgrimage trails, traditional medicines, and springs are all at risk of being destroyed by new mining. Mining on Mt Taylor jeopardizes the spiritual harmony and balance of local communities. Historical and cultural impacts need to be analyzed under the protection of the National Historic Preservation Act and NEPA.

Roca Honda proposes to open their mining operation with no plan on what to do with the uranium once it is mined. There is only one operating mill in the United States, which is not currently taking in any additional ore to process. The fact that there is nowhere to take and store the waste is a critical problem. It is irresponsible and dangerous to begin mining when there is no answer for waste disposal.

Roca Honda would transport radioactive and hazardous materials through surrounding communities. Local law enforcement and public health entities are not prepared to handle accidents during transport. Communities would bear the brunt of responding to emergency situations and living with the aftermath. The DEIS does not identify a mill site,

the transportation route, or communities along the way.

There are two ways to mine uranium: conventional mining and in-situ leach mining. Both methods have been around for years and both have records of contamination. In-situ leach mining involves purposefully contaminating groundwater to mobilize uranium. Roca Honda would be a conventional underground mine, the same type of mines that New Mexico dealt with in the past.

State and federal agencies are not taking into account other nearby mining projects and the cumulative impacts these mines would have on health, water and other natural resources near Mt Taylor. The section on cumulative impacts lists other projects in the Grants Mining District, but doesn't provide a map showing their location or what communities will be impacted.

Communities in northwestern NM are living with the contamination of the past. Families living nearby abandoned uranium mines and mills notice increased rates of cancers and other health problems. This problem has been ignored by state and federal agencies. To proceed with more mines without knowing the scope of impact to people's health is dangerous and deadly.

The federal government and the state of New Mexico need to recognize the rights of people who are living in uranium impacted communities and say "NO" to the proposed Roca Honda mine.

New Mexico is home to hundreds of abandoned uranium mines, with thousands more on the Navajo Nation. These mines leak contaminants into groundwater, release radon into the air, and contribute to health problems of residents living in contaminated communities. Thousands of mine and mill workers have suffered, and continue to suffer and die, from working in hazardous conditions. While there have been some improvements in worker safety, there will always be risks associated with working in mines. Local communities deserve jobs without the risk.

Thank you for considering my comments and I look forward to reviewing the final plan.

Sincerely,

Mr. David Barnes  
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