

Addressing Uranium Contamination in the Navajo Nation

Diné Bikéyah Bikáá'góó Łeetsoh Haagééd Bee Dahóóchxó'góó Baahwiinítį

The lands of the Navajo Nation include 27,000 square miles spread over three states in the Four Corners area. The unique geology of these lands makes them rich in uranium, a radioactive ore in high demand after the development of the atomic power and weapons at the close of World War II in the 1940s.

Diné Bikéyah naadiin tsosts'idi dimíł yázhí t'áala'í tsin sitą dik'ąó haadzohgo táá' ndtsaago hahoodzoh bikáá'góó Kéyah Dįį' Hahoodzoh binaagi. Nį'asdzáan biká'gį' alk'ih sikaadígį ts'ídá leetsoh bíiyisígį bii' hóló' éí bee' Naakigóne' Da'ahijoogąą'dąą' leetsoh bee' be'eldoh tsoh ádaalyaa Náhást'éi ts'áadah dóó bi'aan dídiin yihah dąą'.

From 1944 to 1986, nearly four million tons of uranium ore were extracted from Navajo lands under leases with the Navajo Nation. Many Navajo people worked the mines, often living and raising families in close proximity to the mines and mills.

Náhást'éi ts'áadah dóó bi'aan dídiin dóó bi'aan dįį' yihah dóó Náhást'éi ts'áadah dóó bi'aan tséebídiin dóó bi'aan hastąąh yihah dąą' ts'ídá dįį'di dimíł tsoh ndtsaago haakąó dahidédlo'-(ton) go Diné Bikéyah bikáá'dóó leetsoh choozįid ha'ágééd bee'algha'deetąh bii'dóó. Lą'ída nihi Diné'é nidashnish t'áa leetsoh hadaagééd dóó hadaaleł bíł honį'ąągi bíighahgóó dabiníghan go.

Today the mines are closed, but a legacy of uranium contamination remains, including over 500 abandoned uranium mines (AUMs) as well as homes and drinking water sources with elevated levels of radiation. Potential health effects include lung cancer from inhalation of radioactive particles, as well as bone cancer and impaired kidney function from exposure to radionuclides in drinking water.

Dįįįdi leetsoh hadasgeed yéęhgóó doo nida'anishda ndi ba'át'é'ígį bik'eh kah na'aldeeh kodi, ts'ídá ashdladi neeznádiin ha'ágééd t'ó' ákódaat'éégo bits'ąą' anída'isná (AUM) hoghan dóó tódah leetsoh ba'át'é'ígį yéego wódahti nida'alkidgo. Bila'ashdla'ii bit'íis aląą'át'éégo yéi nít'įh; ajéi yilzólį bii'góne' leetsoh ba'át'é' bíł adadzisdzi' yééh lóód yąąh né'á, inda tó da bíł joodląą'go da hats'in da dóó hachą'ashk'azhí yéidínoot'įł .

EPA maintains a strong partnership with the Navajo Nation and, since 1994, the Superfund Program has provided technical assistance and funding to access potentially contaminated sites and develop a response. In August 2007, the Superfund Program compiled a Comprehensive Database and Atlas with the most complete assessment to date of all known uranium mines on the Navajo Nation. Working with the Navajo Nation, EPA also used its Superfund authority to clean up four residential yards and one home next to the highest priority abandoned uranium mine, Northeast Churchrock Mine, at a cost of more than \$2 million.

Kin Náhálgaideé' Ni'asdzáan Yik'ihdeézíí' Bìl Hazáadoo t'áá'áiyisíí Diné Bi Wááshindoon bidziilgo naanish yee' ahótą' Náhást'é ts'áadah dóó bi'aan Náhást'éei ts'áadah dimííł dóó bi'aan Náhást'édiin dóó bi'aan Hastááh yihah dáą' Diné Bi Wááshindoon Superfund Da'íníish doo Béeso dóó naanish bee'éého'dízinígíí yee' áká'ánálwo'go leetsoh hadaagéed ndt'é'ééhgóo ndtsaago na'askaá' alhiih yiyínil dóó baa'átíhodoot'íłgi dó' naaltsos bikáá'gi héidiilaa. Bine'ánt'áats'ózi naakidimíł yázhí dóó bi'aan tsosts'id yihah dáą' díí leetsoh haagéed naská'yééh dóó t'áá'altsoh leetsoh bídeét'i'go nida'aska'ígíí alhiih yidt'á kéyah bée'élyaa bídast'óogo hadét'éégo niit'á. Áádóó Kin Náhálgaideé' Ni'asdzáan Yik'ihdeézíí' Bìl Hazáadoo bibee hazáanii bidziilgo naanish ádadooníłgíí náskódzaa binají' Kin Łitso Sinilijí Northeast Churchrock Minegi ła' hoghan dóó bich'éédáą'góo ndtsaago nida'azhnish ts'ídá naakidi dimíí tsoh béeso bánii'nilgo.

At the request of the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform in October 2007, EPA, along with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), the Department of Energy (DOE), and the Indian Health Service (IHS) developed a coordinated Five-Year Plan to address uranium contamination in consultation with Navajo Nation EPA. EPA regularly reports back to the Committee and to the Navajo Nation on its progress in implementing the Five-Year Plan.

Ghaąjį' naakidimíł yázhí dóó bi'aan tsosts'id yihah dáą' U.S. House Committee on Oversight dóó Government Reform EPA naanish ndtsaago yich'į' yiyíł aad éi Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) dóó Department of Energy (DOE) dóó Indian Health Service (IHS) díí leetsoh ba'át'e' bee dahóóchxó'góo hasht'ééda doolníłgi naanish naaltsos bikáá' nidadohjiih yidiiniid dóó binají'Diné BiWááshindoon áká'ánálwo'go Ashdla' Nááhaihgóó Hoot'ál hadilyaa kóó leetsoh bee dahóóchxó' bíł nahazáągo naaltsos bikáá'jį' nii'nil. Díįjidi Committee da'íł aad yééh dóó Diné BiWááshindoon ła'dahoodzaagóó t'áá bíł bee nínáháníih.

The lands of the Navajo Nation include scenic mountains; mesas and canyons spread over three states in the Four Corners area.

Diné Bikéyah éi dzil danizhónigo níníł, dóó tsédaakooh táá' ndtsaago hahoodzoh bikáá'góó Kéyah Díį' Hahoodzoh binaagi.

The Five-Year Plan is the first coordinated approach created by the five federal agencies. This landmark plan outlines a strategy for cleanup process for the Navajo Nation over the next five years.

Díí ts'ídá' aláají' kót'áq Kin Náhálgai dóó asdla'go' oonishii Ashdla' Nááhaigóó Hoot'al hadadeidilaa. Ashdla' Nááhaigóó Bihoot'al hadét'éhígíí' éí leetsoh bee dahóochxó'góó hasht'éédahodoolníłgi naaltsos bik'eh adoonishígíí.

EPA is addressing the most urgent risks on the reservation—uranium contaminated water sources and structures. Approximately 30 percent of the Navajo population does not have access to a public drinking water system and may be using unregulated water sources with uranium contamination. EPA and the Navajo Nation EPA have launched an aggressive outreach campaign to inform residents of the dangers of consuming contaminated water.

Kin Náhálgaidéé' Ni'asdzaán Yik'ihdeézíí' Bìł Hazáadoo ts'ídá agháadi tó dóó hoghan leetsoh ba'át'e' bee yíchxó'go bits'ah hast'i' dohígíí yinaalnish Diné Bikéyah bikaá'góó. T'áala'í béeso bee wólta'go táá' dootl'izh bits'át'áq nihi Diné'é doo tó bìł yah adaazłjida biniinaa tó bá'áda'áz áágóó chí'olj' azhah shíí leetsoh bá'át'é' bìł da'altah ndi. Biniinaa Kin Náhálgaidéé' Ni'asdzaán Yik'ihdeézíí' Bìł Hazáadoo dóó Diné BiWáashindoon yéego hootahgóó nidaakaigo tó lahgóó leetsoh bìł da'altahgo yidlánígíí yaa dahalne'.

EPA will also continue to use Superfund authority to address contaminated structures. EPA and Navajo Nation EPA have already assessed 638 structures, targeted at least 34 structures and 12 residential yards for remediation as a precaution, and rebuilt 14 homes.

Kin Náhálgaidéé' Ni'asdzaán Yik'ihdeézíí' Bìł Hazáadoo shíí t'áa Superfund bibeeshazáanii yéego ya'ólíigo hoghan leetsoh ba'át'e' bee dááchxó'ígíí yinaalnish doo. Kin Náhálgaidéé' Ni'asdzaán Yik'ihdeézíí' Bìł Hazáadoo dóó Diné Bi Wáashindoon t'áa'íídáá' hástáadi neeznádiin dóó bi'aan tádiin dóó bi'aan tseebíí hoghan nideiskáa' dóó tá'diin dóó bi'aan díí' nahgóó kódadoolniil índá naakits'áadah hoghan bich'éédáá'góó leetsoh bá'át'é' nahgóó kódadoolniil. Hogha éj díí'ts'áadah t'áa'íídáá' ínidaalyaa.

Over the course of the Five-Year Plan, EPA will focus on the problems posed by abandoned uranium mines, completing a tiered assessment of over 500 mines and taking actions to address the highest priority mines. As mines that pose risks are discovered, EPA may use Superfund authorities, including the National Priorities List, enforcement against responsible parties, or emergency response to require cleanup. At the Northsat Churchrock Mine, the highest –risk mine in the Reservation, EPA is requiring the owner to conduct a cleanup that is protective of nearby residents. EPA is working with the community to ensure the remainder of the site is cleaned up.

Ashdla' Nááhai bil hodeeshzhiizhgo shíí' éí Kin Náhálgaidéé' Ni'asdzáán Yik'ihdéezjí' Bil Hazáadoo ts'ídá' áyisíí yéego' leetsoh haageedjí ba'át'e' bee dahóochxó' góó anídahazt'i'góó' áłtsé néłjídóó, áłkéé' ni'áq na'alkahígíí' ádoonííł díí ashdladi neeznádiin ha'agéedjí na'alkidígíí dóó' agháadi bits'á nilígíí shíí' áłtsé bina'anish doo. Superfund bi bee hazáanii binají' dóó bee' oonish dóó. Northeast Chuchrock Mine éí ts'ídá' aghao' át'éego yidzoh éí t'áá' akwii naanish yíł ninínánee dóó leetsoh hayígeed yééł hasht'ééhodoodlíl háálá binaagóó dahoghan dóó ɓàɓà dahasin. Dííshíí' Kin Náhálgaidéé' Ni'asdzáán Yik'ihdéezjí' Bil Hazáadoo' oonishígíí yik'ih déézjí' doo.

Although the legacy of uranium mining is widespread and will take many years to address completely, the collaborative effort of EPA, other federal agencies and the Navajo Nation will bring an unprecedented level of support and protection for the people at risk from these sites. Much work remains to be done, and EPA is committed to working with the Navajo Nation to remove the most immediate contamination risks and to find permanent solutions to the remaining contamination on the Navajo lands.

Azhá shíí leetsoh hadasgeedgóó ba'át'e' hólóqo nida'ajol ndi dóó t'ó' ákódaat'éé ndi dóó ts'ídá ła'í nááhaigóó bi' doonish ndi Kináhalgai déé' kojí' kéyah bik'i' adeéést'íí' déé' da'íníishdoo' éíí Diné Bi wáashindoon yí ká'anájaahgo t'áá naanish ła'doonííł. Jó' índá' ákónééh yéego naanish ndtsaa. Kin Náhálgaidéé' Ni'asdzáán Yik'ihdéezjí' Bil Hazáadoo' éí naanish ła' dooníłgi t'éí yinéł, yéego leetsoh ba'át'e' bee' anídahazt'i' góó bin doonishgo yeehasá kóq Diné Bjkéyah bikáá' góó.