

For Immediate Release

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Groups React to Letter Notifying McKinley County Commission of Open Meetings Act Violation

Gallup, N.M. - On behalf of two community groups, the New Mexico Environmental Law Center submitted a notice of intent to sue today to the McKinley County Commission identifying a possible Open Meetings Act Violation related to a meeting held in January 2017. Groups signing onto the letter include Red Water Pond Road and Eastern Navajo Dine Against Uranium Mining. The letter outlines that the county failed to give proper notice about the meeting to the public, and didn't publish the agenda in advance of the meeting.

At the January 3rd meeting, the Commission took action on a proposed uranium mining ordinance by voting on changes that gutted the policy being considered. Participants at the meeting said that the changes were introduced at the last minute, providing little to no opportunity for the public to vet them and provide comment.

The notice was delivered to the County Commission electronically on Monday, February 13th 2017. According to statute, the commission has 15 days to respond to the complaint. In response to the letter delivery, organizations released the following statements:

"The County Commission was voted in by the people. They are responsible to listen to the people and make sure we understand the issues and that we have the opportunity to provide our comments. This process cut out our voices and needs to be redone," said **Anna Benally, with Red Water Pond Road Community Association.**

"Most of the kids in McKinley County don't know that they live near uranium mines. And the few that do know, understand that they are impacted because of their exposures. Kids are our future. We must take the time to find out about the health impacts and learn how to protect them now and in the future," said **Teracita Keyanna, with Red Water Pond Road Community Association.**

"McKinley County Commissioners have a responsibility to protect their citizens from the devastating environmental and health impacts from past uranium mining. The moratorium would not impact any existing or proposed new uranium mines because there are none that are financially viable in the foreseeable future. The Commissioners should be championing health studies and working to support uranium cleanup. That will bring real jobs and economic growth

to McKinley County,” said **Susan Gordon, coordinator for the Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment.**

“The proposed ordinance is a critical opportunity that allows the county to evaluate the risks of new mining, while also putting safeguards in place to protect McKinley County families, natural resources, and the local economy. We stand in strong support of this ordinance, and support efforts to improve transparency at the county level to ensure that all voices are heard in the decision-making process,” said **Talia Boyd, with Conservation Voters New Mexico Education Fund.**

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