

## PEOPLE'S ACTION CONVENTION, WASHINGTON, DC, APRIL 25, 2017

CONFRONTING URANIUM MINING IN NEW MEXICO—Protecting people, land and water.  
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Our homeland is within the area known by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as the Grants Mining District and to some it is called the Grants Uranium Belt. This area in northwest New Mexico is approximately 25 miles wide and 100 miles long. It once contained 97 working uranium mines, now called legacy mines, and 5 uranium mills which are now superfund sites. At one period Laguna Pueblo, an indigenous community had the world's largest open pit uranium mine. This region produced uranium for 50 years and the people and towns prospered and they were proud of it. The town of Grants called itself the Uranium Capitol of the World. Well, uranium killed miners, millers, and their housewives. During 50 years of uranium production the state and federal government failed to do any epidemiological health studies. Yet people are still dying today of some kind of cancer illnesses.

One community called Murray Acres along with 4 adjacent sub-divisions live several hundred yards downstream of the Homestake Barrick Gold (HBG) mill reclamation site had a story in the Albuquerque Journal newspaper which told the story of people who had died in their area and who were affected by uranium. The newspaper titled a community map the Death Map. EPA in a risk assessment study found the people there **face excess cancer risks 18 times higher than EPA's "generally acceptable risk" range**. After over 35 years of attempt to remediate this mill tailings site it is still polluting surface, groundwater and emitting radon gas into air and affecting all surrounding and nearby people. The residents can no longer drink their well water and their livestock and agriculture are also being affected. There is general concern that the aquifer serving the nearby towns of Milan and Grants will be polluted from the uranium mill tailings site. The residents living next to the Homestake Barrick Gold site are now demanding--move the tailings pile or move us.

Compounding this ongoing uranium legacy mines and mills are plans for new mining. The rural depressed area actually support new mining. Four new mines are being proposed. One an in-situ leach mining which penetrates groundwater is planned at Churrock. Another is the Roca Honda Resources Mine which will dewater precious groundwater at about 4-6 million gallons of water per day. Another mine called the Laramide Mine is being proposed at La Jara Mesa. Also, the Rio Grande Resources Mine, which formerly operated for 15 years by the Gulf Chevron Corporation now is moving from a zombie, standby mine, to active status. Our organization and nearby tribal communities are especially concerned about mining groundwater and simply just dumping it into nearby arroyos.

Local community activists have coalesced to demand the clean up of legacy uranium contamination and to oppose new uranium mining. 5 core groups have come together under the umbrella of the Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment (MASE). They are the Bluewater Valley Downstream Alliance (BVDA) who are the most affected people since they live next to the Homestake Barrick Gold mill tailings clean up, the Post-71 group which works to enact the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act to include other radiation affected people

after 1971, two Navajo community group people called the Red Water Road Pond Community and Eastern Navajo Dine Against Uranium Mining, and the Laguna Acoma Coalition for a Safe Environment. The group has enacted a Nuclear Free Zone Declaration for Northwest New Mexico/Grants Uranium Belt. MASE also has various allies and supporter organizations. The value of a multi-culture group working together is seen as all people living and working together to protect their homeland and environment.

There are extreme challenges for us. MASE works multi-culturally (all people living in New Mexico) to educate community people, community leaders, and local politicians about the dangers of radioactive pollution. Uranium kills and people really don't know it. Our group, this year, held a Uranium Workers Day at the state legislative session which recognized the contribution of all workers in the nuclear fuel industry. The biggest challenges facing MASE are having federal and state agencies to clean up the Homestake Barrick Gold mill tailings site which MASE considers impossible to accomplish. Just this year the Nuclear Regulatory Commission found Homestake Barrick Gold in violation of many years in not adhering to their license requirements. The second big challenge is preventing the Roca Honda Mine from ever opening. It has been several years since the US Forest Service issued its Draft Environment Impact Statement and it is supposed to occur this year. The main reason preventing the opening of new uranium mining is the low spot market price of uranium. Collaboration is critical if we want to stop all forms of nuclear energy. We must all become anti-nukes.