



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contacts

Susan Gordon
MASE Coordinator
505.577.8438

Rachel Conn
Projects Director, **Amigos Bravos**
575.758.3874

Eric Jantz
Staff Attorney, NMELC
505.989.9022 x120

Michael Jensen
Communications and Public Education, NMELC
505.362.1063

Community Groups Appeal Mt Taylor Mine Permit Approval

SANTA FE – The Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment (MASE) and Amigos Bravos filed a Notice of Appeal of the New Mexico Mining Commission’s July 27, 2018, decision affirming the Mining and Minerals Division (MMD) Director’s earlier approval of the return to mining activity at the Mt Taylor uranium mine.

The Notice was filed in the First Judicial District Court in Santa Fe by the New Mexico Environmental Law Center, which has been representing the two community groups.

The Notice states simply that the Commission’s Decision and Order “is arbitrary, capricious, unsupported by substantial evidence in the record and not in accordance with law” and that the Commission’s process for hearing and considering MASE and Amigos Bravos’ petition for review of the Director’s decision was also “arbitrary, capricious and contrary to law.”

In some ways, the Commission’s decision hinged on definitions in the New Mexico Mining Act. Commissioner Dennis McQuillan of the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED), who signed the Commission’s Final Order on the Mt Taylor uranium mine operating permit, said in announcing the decision that a “plain reading” of the definition of mining allows the Mining and Minerals Division (MMD) Director to consider all land disturbance to be mining.

Eric Jantz, staff attorney at the New Mexico Environmental Law Center, said, “The Appeal will challenge this dubious idea. Clearly, under the language of the New Mexico Mining Act and the mission of the MMD to use mining for the economic benefit of the people of New Mexico, MMD and the Commission approve mine “operating” permits, not “disturbed land” permits. The Commission’s decision has removed mining’s economic activity as a requirement under the Mining Act.”

Susan Gordon, MASE coordinator, reiterated an argument made by MASE members at Mt Taylor hearings over the years. “Uranium mining has brought devastating impacts to the health of our communities that surround uranium mining sites and to the environment. The Mt Taylor mine has not produced for almost 30 years. Without a viable economic basis for future production, the Commission should have told Rio Grande Resources to shut down and clean up.”

Joe Zupan, Executive Director of Amigos Bravos, said, “Allowing Rio Grande Resources to avoid cleaning up the mine sends a bad signal to other mining operations, that if they can just continue doing something at their mine site they can avoid final cleanup.”

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