



Red Water Pond Road Community Association

RWPRCA, founded in 2007, is based near Churchrock, New Mexico in the Coyote Chapter of the Navajo Nation. The community lives between two Superfund sites, the Northeast Churchrock Mine and the Quivera/Kerr McGee Mine and one uranium mill Superfund site, the United Nuclear Corporation Churchrock Mill.

The Northeast Churchrock Mine (NECR) site is the largest defunct mine on the Navajo Nation and has the highest priority for cleanup. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) placed NECR on the National Priority List for cleanup in 1983.

Despite several time critical actions to protect the community, including the removal approximately 200,000 tons of contaminated soil, the waste has not been moved and continues to expose the community to high levels of radium.

For decades, the RWPRCA has been given deadlines for when the cleanup would start. Those dates have all passed without actual shovels in the ground work starting. Recently, EPA suggested that work would begin at the beginning of 2026 which is 42 years after the dangerous situation was identified.

Mission

The Red Water Pond Road Community Association's mission is to restore the land and water contaminated by uranium mining, improve the health of community members, and protect and preserve the natural and cultural environment in which they live. RWPRCA is a nonprofit organization recognized under Navajo Nation laws including Fundamental Laws of the Diné, Title 1, Chapter 2.

Single Largest Radioactive Accident in US History

On July 16, 1979, an earthen dam owned by the United Nuclear Corp. broke and released 1,100 tons of radioactive uranium tailings and 94 gallons of toxic wastewater into the Rio Puerco, contaminating the river for at least 80 miles.

The radioactive material was a mixture of water and mill tailings; a yellow slurry which retained toxic contaminants from the mining process. When the earthen dam broke, the radioactive broth affected the communities of Pinedale, Church Rock, Gallup, Tseyatoh and Manuelito in New Mexico, and Lupton, Houck, and the Newlands area near Sanders and Chambers in Arizona. Cattle were contaminated, sheep died and several hundred families were left without a water source.

The spill remains the single largest release of radioactive material in US history. Yet its effects on the health of the area's people and animals and harm to the environment has not been adequately studied by the government.

Every July 16 for over 45 years, as Edith Hood, a RWPRCA leader describes *"We walk to the site and say healing prayers. We believe we need to support one another and cherish all our families and communities, just as our elders have. By working together, with our combined intelligence and wisdom we can address this legacy to provide a life of balance and harmony for our people and future generations."*



RWPRCA TESTIFIES ON HUMAN RIGHTS

RWPRC has testified before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) three times.

The first time in 2016, Edith Hood addressed the Human Rights to Water: *"We were never told of the dangers and hazards of these mines. Now I understand that my own family has suffered health impacts from our exposures to uranium contaminated dust and water."*

RWPRC joined with others for a March 2023 presentation on Nuclear Colonialism as part of the IACHR's 186th Session in Los Angeles.

"The commissioners were surprised that this is the situation that communities like mine are facing, living with this kind of disparity where there's no equality at all." - Teracita Keyanna.

Following that, two members of the Commission traveled to Churchrock in July to learn more about the conditions in the area. The Commissioners were treated to blue-corn mush and mutton stew by the community

In 2024, the community was invite to participate in a Thematic Hearing on the "Impact of Extractive Industries on the Sacred Sites of Indigenous Peoples in the US" held as part of the 187th Session in Washington, DC.

"The legacy of the uranium mining industry continues to impact Indigenous people across the continent without any real solutions from the US government. We must acknowledge the negative results of nuclear and uranium development in our communities." - Jonathan Perry



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CURRENT INITIATIVES

The Red Water Pond Road Community was successful in pressuring the EPA to agree to move 1 million tons of uranium mine waste from the Quivera mine site in their village and transport it 30 miles to a municipal landfill, where it will be properly disposed of and kept away from people.

However, new threats have emerged, including a plan by DISA Technologies, Inc to use High Pressure Slurry Ablation (HPSA) near their homes. Ablation is a technology that involves using high pressure water to separate uranium from waste rock.

Ablation is being marketed as remediation, however the Nuclear Regulatory Commission requires a permit as a milling operation .

DISA's ablation leaves behind most of the waste rock which still has a contamination risk, and there are no commercial scale data that indicates HPSA can remediate uranium mine waste to safe levels. Ablation is a process that uses a lot of water – a resource which must be protected in our arid climate. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission recently stated that DISA's HPSA technology will use hundreds of thousands of gallons of fresh water every month over the span of eight months to thirteen years.

An old threat has returned to the area. NuFuels corporation wants to use In-Situ Leach (ISL) mining and processing in areas near existing homes and a school on Navajo Nation. This project has been put on the Fast-41 list from the administration that will limit environmental review and public comments.

