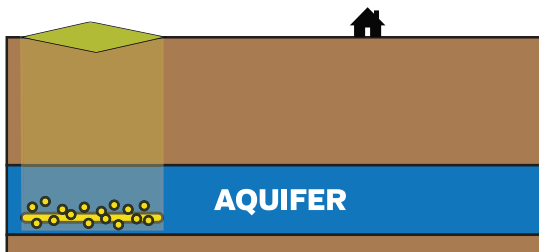


What is ISL mining?

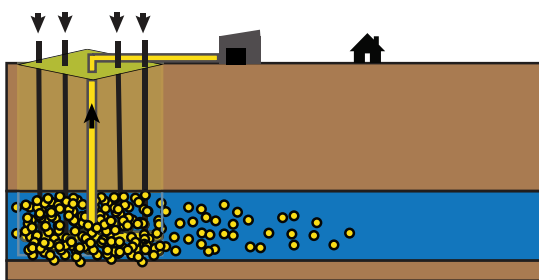
When HRI first proposed “*in situ leach*” (ISL) mining, it was still a relatively new process. Closer to fracking than it is to traditional hardrock mining, it involves injecting a bicarbonate solution underground to strip uranium out of rock strata and into the aquifer.

But there's a catch—a big catch: ISL mining works by polluting groundwater with uranium and other radioactive and heavy metals. The goal is to recover the uranium, but the technology is not very efficient. So once an aquifer is polluted, it's going to stay that way—in fact, no ISL mined aquifer has *ever* been cleaned up to pre-mining condition. Regulators' go-to solution for this problem? Relax groundwater quality standards until the contaminated groundwater is legal...

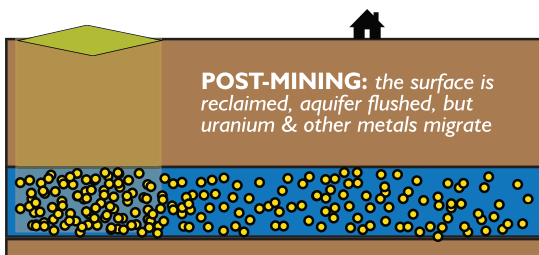
Uranium Resources, Inc. planned to construct 402 injection wells and 245 extraction wells for the Crownpoint Uranium Project. To date, not one site has been constructed nor one ounce of yellowcake produced.



PRE-MINING conditions: some Cold War-era pockets of uranium contamination locked in rock strata. The green area = 160 acre of aquifer exempted by the EPA.



DURING ISL MINING: chemicals pumped into aquifer, uranium-rich slurry is pumped up to a processing plant. Uranium and other heavy metals escape in aquifer and air.



POST-MINING: the surface is reclaimed, aquifer flushed, but uranium & other metals migrate

(continued from page 2)

Like the cancers that its waste causes, the uranium mining industry lay dormant, only to resurface a decade later when a Texas company called Hydro Resources, Inc. (HRI) quietly applied for a nuclear materials license from the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). The license was for a uranium mining project to be located in Church Rock and the nearby Diné village of Crownpoint.

Having never seen a nuclear project it didn't like, the NRC began fast-tracking the project. However, in 1994, halfway through the NRC's licensing process, resident Mitchell Capitan read about the project in the local newspaper. Mitchell had worked for an ISL operation years before and knew that once an aquifer had been contaminated by the process, it would remain forever poisoned. Since Church Rock and Crownpoint depend on the local aquifer for their household supply, the HRI project, if approved, would spell the end of clean drinking water.

Mitchell, his wife Rita, Church Rock resident Larry King, and other concerned citizens formed an organization called Eastern Navajo Diné Against Uranium Mining (ENDAUM) to fight the mine. They couldn't have anticipated what a fight it would be.

The HRI fight has become a daily part of Larry King's and the Capitans' lives. In 1996 ENDAUM came to the New Mexico Environmental Law Center for legal assistance, and the HRI case has been a part of the Law Center's docket ever since. We've worked with ENDAUM through the NRC's administrative process and a federal court appeal.

Despite losing those cases, ENDAUM and the Law Center have made an indelible mark on the actual and metaphorical landscape. Before we began actively resisting uranium mining, the devastation that historic uranium mining has caused was typically a local issue. Now community organizations throughout the country regularly work together to force cleanup of existing uranium mines or prevent new mines from opening. Uranium mining companies used to be able to blame cancer-related deaths on smoking. But because of community activism, scientific studies are now being done that demonstrate uranium mine waste causes cancer, heart disease, and autoimmune disorders wherever it occurs. And community activism forced Navajo Nation leaders to find the strength to ban uranium mining outright in 2005. No new uranium mining has begun in the state in the past 20 years.

The struggle is far from over. Hundreds of abandoned uranium mines continue to fester in communities across the West. Mine executives and corporate lawyers continue to peddle the same empty promises and lies about their industry. But we know better. And as long as there are organizations like the Law Center and ENDAUM and their supporters around, the uranium industry had better expect a fight.