

MULTICULTURAL ALLIANCE FOR A SAFE ENVIRONMENT (MASE)

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PRESS RELEASE

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The Navajo Nation's ban on uranium mining — the Diné Natural Resources Protection Act of 2005 — was reaffirmed by Navajo President Joe Shirley, Jr., and Navajo Nation Council Resource Committee chairman George Arthur as late as July 16th, but Uranium Resources, Inc. (URI) and its New Mexico subsidiary, Hydro Resources, Inc. (HRI), continue to thumb their noses at Navajo law and sovereignty by pressing local leaders to support their unsafe uranium in situ leach (ISL) mines planned for Church Rock and Crownpoint chapters.

Their latest spectacle is an “educational” luncheon for Gallup Chamber of Commerce members and McKinley County Commissioners at a downtown sports bar at noon today. While URI officials will be inside repeating the nonsense that ISL mining is “environmentally benign,” MASE members, including many from the local communities, will be walking peacefully outside to remind the public that the Church Rock-Crownpoint ISL Project will contaminate parts of an aquifer that at least 15,000 people living in the Eastern Navajo Agency depend on as their sole source of drinking water and livestock water.

“We’re pretty sure URI/HRI won’t be sharing with local leaders the conclusion of a recent U.S. Geological Survey report,” said Nadine Padilla, MASE coordinator. “The report said,

To date, no remediation of an ISR operation in the United States has successfully returned the aquifer to baseline conditions. Often at the end of monitoring, contaminants continue to increase...¹

“They won’t tell you how their neighbors in Texas feel betrayed and exploited,” Padilla said. “Teo Saenz, a Kingsville, Texas, resident who lives near URI’s Kingville Dome ISL mine, had this to say in August 2007 about URI’s ISL practices:

‘I have witnessed firsthand the significant shortcoming of the In Situ Mining as practiced by URI Inc. and the negative environmental impact due to spills, excursions, and the mining company being unwilling and unable to restore the water to baseline conditions.’

“And they aren’t likely to acknowledge that they’ve shut in their Texas ISL wellfields, lost millions of dollars in each of the last two years, and have few prospects of mining with market prices low and little capital to spend in New Mexico,” Padilla said.²

¹ Otten, J. K., and Hall, S., USGS, “In-situ recovery uranium mining in the United States: Overview of production and remediation issues”, IAEA-CN-175/87. Available at: http://www-pub.iaea.org/MTCD/Meetings/PDFplus/2009/cn175/URAM2009/Session%204/08_56_Otton_USA.pdf.

MASE believes that truth is that this is an issue of Environmental Racism. URI/HRI continues to pitch its unpopular mining project despite the fact that 13 Navajo communities, including Church Rock and Crownpoint chapters, and dozens of other local and regional institutions adopted resolutions or made statements opposing new uranium mining between 1995 and 2006. Testifying before Congress on March 13, 2008, President Shirley said, “The Navajo people do not want renewed uranium mining on or near the Navajo Nation. I ask you to respect the Diné Natural Resources Protection Act that places a moratorium on Navajo land and within Navajo Indian Country.”

In the Church Rock area, Navajo families continue to live with the threats of long-term pollution and increased health risks from past uranium mining and milling, including the United Nuclear Corporation uranium mill tailings spill in 1979 — the largest release of radioactive waste in U.S. history that harmed Navajo communities along the Puerco River in New Mexico and Arizona. Cleanup on the highest-priority abandoned mine in Navajo Country, the Northeast Church Rock Mine, started just this summer. And URI/HRI has not committed to a full cleanup of the Old Churchrock Mine, which it acquired from UNC in 1993.

"HRI needs to respect the Navajo Nation ban on uranium mining and listen to the people of this area," Padilla said. "We don't want their dirty, polluting uranium mines in our communities and we will never allow them to come back. We want renewable energy and green jobs for our families."

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² Business Wire. Uranium Resources, Inc. Reports \$8.2 Million in Cash for Third Quarter 2009. Nov. 9, 2009; see http://www.rttnews.com/ViewPR.aspx?PrID=496625&SMap=1&Id=VendorFeed/1192009/200911090655BIZWIRE_USPR_BW5457.XML