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Navajo Nation Receives Award to Clean Up Abandoned Uranium Mines

WINDOW ROCK, AZ. – The Navajo Nation has more money to clean up its abandoned uranium mines.

Thanks to a recent grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, remediation will begin at abandoned uranium mines on the Navajo Nation. USEPA's Acting Regional Administrator for the Pacific Southwest, Alexis Strauss, stated, "USEPA is pleased to expand our partnership with the Navajo Nation through this new agreement to address the toxic legacy of abandoned uranium mines."

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye stated, "We are pleased that Navajo AML has been provided a grant in the amount of \$328,847 to assist the US EPA in conducting cleanup work. Abandoned mines exist across the Navajo Nation and in many cases, there is no evidence available to identify the companies that had originally mined these sites. I express my appreciation to EPA for assuming this responsibility and recognizing that these sites need to be cleaned up using federal dollars. We appreciate the funds as they address a critical detriment to the Navajo Nation."

Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources Executive Director Bidtah Becker noted, "This grant would not have been possible if it weren't for the hardworking staff at the Navajo Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) Reclamation Program who submitted a grant application to address uranium contamination at our abandoned mines. Our priority is to ensure that the Navajo people's natural resources are protected for future generations."

Navajo AML staff will work diligently with the USEPA Region 9 Tribal Lands Clean up Section to assist and coordinate with all aspects of the grant contract for the field and technical assistance in the Navajo Abandoned Uranium Mines (AUM) initiatives. With the help from other tribal, federal, non-governmental, and contractual partners, USEPA Region 9 believes that Navajo AML is the natural partner given their technical expertise, familiarity with AUMs terrain and location, public relations experience and their standing as an expert reclamation agency within the Navajo Government System.

The USEPA Grant awarded to Navajo AML is for a duration of 14 months - subsequent funding may become available in future years. Navajo AML will assist USEPA Region 9 with understanding all phases of remediation at the mine sites, providing logistical support, technical support, and engineering expertise.

Navajo AML Department Manager Madeline Roanhorse stated, "Navajo AML is looking forward to the implementation of this new partnership and the positive impacts it will bring to the Navajo people in regards to the health and environmental issues with uranium mines across the Navajo Nation."

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