



The Navajo Nation
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**U.S. EPA announces \$220 million contract awards for the clean-up
of more than 50 abandoned uranium mine sites on the Navajo Nation**

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced three contract awards for the clean-up of more than 50 abandoned uranium mine sites on the Navajo Nation on Thursday, worth up to \$220 million over the next five years.

According to the U.S. EPA, work is scheduled to begin later this year following the completion of assessments in coordination with the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency. The cleanup sites are in New Mexico's Grants Mining District and in 10 chapters located on the Navajo Nation, which was the primary focus of uranium extraction and production activities for several decades beginning in the 1950's.

The Navajo Area Abandoned Mine Remedial Construction and Services Contracts were awarded to Red Rock Remediation Joint Venture, Environmental Quality Management Inc., and Arrowhead Contracting Inc. The majority of the \$220 in funding comes from the \$1 billion Tronox settlement in 2015. In addition, the U.S. EPA and the Navajo Nation have secured funding agreements, through enforcement agreements and other legal settlements, for the assessment and clean-up of approximately 200 abandoned uranium mine sites on the Navajo Nation.

"The Navajo people have endured decades of radiation exposure and contamination caused by uranium mining and production that has taken the lives of many former miners and downwinders and continues to impact the health of our children. We appreciate the U.S. EPA's efforts to create incentives and opportunities for Navajo Nation residents by working with the contracted companies to develop training programs for our people and businesses to promote professional growth related to abandoned mine clean-ups. We strongly encourage these companies to create more opportunities for Navajo businesses to receive sub-contracts for the work related to assessments and clean-up efforts. We have many Navajo-owned entrepreneurs and businesses that have the expertise and experience to help clean-up our communities," said Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez.

Each of the companies will develop training programs for Navajo individuals and businesses to promote professional growth in areas related to the AMRCS contract. Workforce training that could be offered by the contractors may cover radiological contamination, health and safety,

construction and road building. In addition, the contracts require the three companies to provide quarterly reports to the EPA, the Navajo Nation, and the public on cleanup progress, training, and Navajo job and business opportunities, according to the U.S. EPA.

“This is good news for the Navajo people and the communities that are directly impacted. Our administration has met with the U.S. EPA on numerous occasions to ensure that we make progress with uranium mine clean-up efforts. We had over 500 abandoned uranium mine sites and the U.S. EPA is making progress to address these sites, but it is taking time. Under the leadership of the Navajo Nation EPA’s newly-appointed Executive Director, Valinda C. Shirley, we are confident that she will continue to work well with our federal partners to make more progress and to ensure that the Navajo people and businesses are afforded opportunities along the way,” said Vice President Lizer.

“We are very pleased that Native American-owned firms are being considered and selected for the remediation of uranium mine sites. The award of these contracts propels the clean-up of our priority mine sites across the Navajo Nation. The Navajo Nation EPA is very pleased with the announcement from the U.S. EPA as we continue to work toward more progress,” said Navajo Nation EPA Executive Director Valinda C. Shirley.

During the Cold War, 30 million tons of uranium ore were mined on or adjacent to the Navajo Nation, leaving more than 500 abandoned mines. Since 2008, EPA has conducted preliminary investigations at all of the mines, completed 113 detailed assessments, cleaned up over 50 contaminated structures, provided safe drinking water to over 3,000 families in partnership with the Indian Health Service, and completed cleanup, stabilization or fencing at 29 mines.

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