Navajo Abandoned Uranium Mines

2012 Tribal Lands and Environment Forum

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Uranium Contamination on Navajo Nation

- 5-Year Multi Agency Plan (2008-2012)
  - Participating Agencies
  - EPA/Navajo EPA Accomplishments

- Current Mine Clean up

- Development of Next 5-Year Plan and Future Priorities
5-Year Plan to Address Uranium Legacy 2008-2012

- Centers for Disease Control & Indian Health Service – Health Assessment
- Department of Energy – Mill Sites
- Nuclear Regulatory Commission – Regulated Facilities
- Bureau of Indian Affairs – Tuba City Dump
- EPA – Structures, Water Supplies, and Mines
EPA: 5 Year Plan Results

- Good understanding of the scope of the problem
- Addressed the most urgent risks first: structures, water supplies, and mines with high exposure
- Responsible Parties found for 75 mines
- Built working relationships with Navajo Nation, communities, and agencies
Results: Structures

- EPA and Navajo EPA screened nearly 700 homes and other structures for potential contamination
- EPA completed the demolition of 34 structures (including homes and ceremonial hogans)
- EPA rebuilt 17 structures
- Awarded grant to Navajo Division of Community Development to rebuild up to 12 homes planned for demolition Summer 2012
Results: Water

- EPA & CDC tested 240 drinking water wells for contamination
- Shut down or posted sources exceeding drinking water standards
- Piloted new water hauling service to remote areas
- Partnered with Indian Health Service and HUD to invest $24.5 million in new water lines

*Navajo Nation policy is that these wells are for livestock use only and are not to be used for human drinking water.*
Results: Mines

- Completed screening-level field assessments of 524 mine areas and provided reports and maps to Navajo Nation
- Conducting CERCLA response actions at 14 high priority mine sites in 4 of the 6 mining regions on the Nation
- Enforcing cleanup by 7 responsible parties
Major Mining Areas with CERCLA Response Actions
Background represents approximately 10^{-4} Risk
Typical Mine Adjacent to Structures and Little Colorado River
Next 5-Year Plan

- Geographic approach to community involvement and site prioritization
  - Detailed maps to chapters
  - Meet with residents to discuss land use and options for cleanup/risk mitigation

- Continue Potential Responsible Party search and enforcement efforts

- Challenges to clean up
  - Large-scale waste disposal
  - “orphan mines” with no responsible party
Questions?