



# New Mexico Environment Department

## Uranium Mining Legacy Cleanup

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Radioactive and Hazardous Materials Committee





# Addressing Legacy Contamination

- Cleaning up legacy contamination from uranium mining and milling is a priority requiring sustained efforts and resources
- Active mining and milling across hundreds of sites in NM and on Tribal lands from the mid-1950s through the 1980s
- Environmental and public health risks include exposure to radioactivity and health-related effects from ingestion of contaminants in groundwater (e.g., selenium, nitrate, uranium)
- Industry and the federal government have a responsibility to address legacy contamination and protect communities
- NMED's regulatory role is to hold polluters accountable and oversee the protection and restoration of groundwater at former mines and mill sites



# Complex Regulatory Regime

- State of New Mexico
  - ▣ *New Mexico Water Quality Act* (NMED Ground Water Quality Bureau)
  - ▣ *New Mexico Mining Act* (EMNRD Mining and Minerals Division)
- Federal Government
  - ▣ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
    - *Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA)*, aka the Superfund law
      - Tronox Mines
      - Listed Superfund Sites
      - Other CERCLA actions
  - ▣ U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC)
    - Licenses for Uranium Mill Sites
  - ▣ Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Actions
- Tribes, Nations, Pueblos
  - ▣ Sites on Navajo Nation
  - ▣ Jackpile-Paguate Superfund Site, Laguna Pueblo



# Legislation Passed in 2022

- House Bill 164 (regular session)
  - Established Uranium Mine Reclamation Coordinator positions at NMED and EMNRD
  - Directs NMED to:
    - Coordinate cleanup across 11 state agencies
    - Develop strategic plan
    - Develop plan for consultation/coordination with federal agencies, Tribal governments and stakeholders
    - Work to establish uranium reclamation as target economic development industry
    - Update abandoned uranium mine (AUM) database
    - Report annually to this committee on progress
- Senate Bill 1 (special session)
  - Funding to support HB164 to plan, administer, and oversee uranium mine remediation/cleanup
    - NMED: \$410,000 (recurring)
    - EMNRD: \$180,000 (recurring)



# Implementing HB 164

- NMED's Uranium Mine Reclamation Coordinator will sit in the Office of the Secretary and work closely with the NMED staff in the Water Protection Division, NMED's Tribal Liaison, and partners in other agencies
- The Coordinator will lead NMED's implementation of HB164
- June 2022 Gold King Mine settlement includes U.S. EPA designation of the Director of the Office of Mountains, Deserts and Plains as the EPA point of contact for state uranium coordinators



# Contact Information

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