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Comments: I urge the U.S. Forest Service to conduct a rigorous, independent environmental review of the proposed Roca Honda uranium mine near Jesus Mesa, west of Mount Taylor, in the Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands. This proposed underground mine would operate in McKinley County near Grants, New Mexico, in a landscape already marked by uranium extraction, unfinished cleanup, and water insecurity.

Please examine, in transparent and site-specific detail, what mine dewatering would do to groundwater, domestic and livestock wells, springs, aquifers, and connected surface waters. The project involves depressurizing wells to control groundwater entering the mine, with reported water use of more than 1.6 billion gallons over its life. Earlier analysis projected substantial aquifer drawdown that could continue long after active mining ends. The EIS must use current hydrogeologic data, account for drought and climate stress, identify potentially affected wells and springs, assess cumulative withdrawals, and require enforceable monitoring, replacement-water commitments, mitigation, and financial assurance before harm occurs.

Water here is not an expendable input to a mine plan. It is a rare and precious inheritance in an arid land-water for families, ranchers, wildlife, plants, ceremony, and generations yet to come. Its purity and reliability matter. An aquifer that takes centuries to recharge, or that becomes contaminated with uranium and associated metals, cannot simply be restored on demand after a mining company leaves.
New Mexico's uranium legacy requires far more than promises that this project will be different. Uranium mining and milling in the Grants Mining District have left documented groundwater and soil contamination. The former Jackpile Mine near Paguate on Laguna Pueblo and numerous abandoned uranium sites across the region show that harm can outlast mining by generations. The EPA continues investigating and cleaning up former uranium mine sites near Church Rock, northeast of Gallup. Across the Navajo Nation, more than 500 abandoned uranium mines and affected homes and water sources remain part of this legacy. These are warnings that must guide the review of Roca Honda.

The Forest Service must fully analyze radon and radiation exposure for workers and nearby residents; dust and diesel emissions; uranium and heavy-metal contamination; waste rock and stormwater; transportation risks; and whether new pumping and disturbance could mobilize or worsen existing contamination. The review must consider the cumulative burden on communities that have already lived with abandoned mines, contaminated wells, and decades of cleanup.

Mount Taylor is not simply a mineral district. It is a Traditional Cultural Property of profound importance to the Navajo Nation and multiple Pueblo communities. The EIS must meaningfully evaluate impacts to sacred places, cultural landscapes, archaeological resources, traditional uses, and Tribal rights-not reduce consultation to a procedural step after key decisions have already been made.

Please identify, plainly and publicly, every protection for groundwater, drinking water, air quality, radioactive materials, Tribal consultation, cultural resources, reclamation, and long-term monitoring that would need to be waived, weakened, changed, or reinterpreted for this mine to move forward. The public deserves to know what protections remain firm, who will enforce them, what happens when standards are exceeded, and who will pay if the company fails or contamination persists after closure.

Water is not merely a "resource" to be drawn down for a twenty-year mine plan. It is the pure, irreplaceable foundation of life in this dry land: water for families, animals, plants, ceremony, and generations not yet born. We should not approve a project on the assumption that future communities can live with depleted wells, radioactive dust, contaminated aquifers, or another century of cleanup. The question is not only whether this mine can be

permitted. The question is whether it is wise-and whether we are willing to protect Mount Taylor and its waters with the care they deserve.