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First name: Abby

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear USFS,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed Roca Honda underground uranium mining project by Energy Fuels Resources. The project threatens regional water, community health, and cultural sites.

Water:

Water is already a major concern in New Mexico. Just this year the Rio Grande was running dry before it reached Albuquerque for much of the year, and many other streams and underground water sources are depleting faster than they can restore. This mine will use millions of gallons of water and risks permanent contamination of vital underground aquifers that feed regional drinking supplies, risking the health and livability of local communities both now and well into the future. Water is life. We cannot live without it, and we cannot risk further contamination and depletion of water sources that are already scarce.

The concern about water is not only for the people and beings closest to the mine; pollution travels in both water and air, putting the whole region at risk in New Mexico and surrounding states.

Public Health

Contamination from uranium mining is already linked to a suite of public health issues, including various cancers, kidney disease, and reproductive problems. As someone who witnessed my mother battle breast cancer, I know firsthand how much pain cancer can cause. It's something I don't wish on anyone. When we have strong evidence of the link between uranium mining and cancer, it's extremely irresponsible and cruel to move forward with mining more uranium, especially in an area already over-exploited by mining and drilling. The path of least suffering for the greatest number of people is one where this mine does not exist.

Sacred Place

The area in which this project is proposed is a sacred cultural site. The project area encroaches on the Mount Taylor Traditional Cultural Property, creating cultural impacts to local Indigenous nations. Indigenous people have a right to access this place without interference and without the contamination and pollution of a uranium mine, which risks damaging the area for generations to come.

National Forest

Our forests are also sacred. I love hiking in our National Forests; they can provide a place of refuge for many - human, animal, plants, and more. This project would greatly disrupt the experience of visiting and relating to the Cibola National Forest area. This place deserves to be protected, honored, and cared for in the way the ecology demands, not severely disrupted with roads and other contaminating infrastructure.

Comment Period

The brief 30-day scoping period hinders proper Tribal Consultation. And it's not just hindering outreach to local Tribes; the timeline is also insufficient for the broader public to engage in this process, especially those in rural communities. A longer comment period is needed for appropriate outreach, education, and proper scientific review to occur.

New Mexico already has a legacy of contamination and an extensive history of abandoned uranium mines, which underscore the dangers of approving new long-term mining operations. We need to clean up and not allow new mining.

As a young person in New Mexico, the question that I leave you with is: what do you want your legacy to be? Is

your legacy - the way your kids and future generations remember you - one of contamination, pollution, cancer, and desecrated land? Or one of protection, care, health, safety, and beautiful places to build relationships with?

I urge the Forest Service to extend the comment period and to reject the Plan of Operations to safeguard Mount Taylor, our precious water, and the Cibola National Forest.

Sincerely,
Abby Shepard
Resident of Santa Fe, NM