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Article in Question:

## **Texans: Say No to Uranium Mining**

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CHURCH ROCK — In the late 1980s, representatives of Uranium Resources Inc. came to the small Texas town of Kingsville with promises of jobs and royalties, and a pledge to leave their well water as clean as they found it. Scores of landowners signed their acres over, and URI started mining in 1988. Some say the company has done everything it said it would. **Others say it's broken every pledge and promise it made.**

**[Who said they broke every pledge? Author is casting aspersions without citing evidence]**

Two decades on, URI representatives are **making the same promises** in Church Rock and Crownpoint. A small band of Texans paid a personal visit to the area last week to urge locals not to believe them.

**[Why should a small band of Texas do such a thing? Who paid for their trip expenses?]**

**"Don't sign on, don't lease,"** said Fred Bell, a 1951 graduate of Gallup High School who now lives seven miles south of Kingsville. **"They'll get all they can out of you and then they're gone."**

**[ 1)The implication is that he's one of the people affected by the uranium mining. The fact is that Kingsville Dome is much farther than seven miles south of Kingsville, meaning that Mr. Bell doesn't live anywhere near the mine.**

**2) Does he wish he had leases that were producing uranium?**

**3) Does he believe his ground-water supply has been damaged?]**

Bell and five other members of STOP South Texas Opposes Pollution, a grassroots group trying to bring URI's Texas operations **to an end traveled to Gallup on their own dime for three days of site visits,** community meetings and radio spots. The damage done, they say their land will never be the same. But they hope their **stories will save people here from "making the same mistake."**

**[ 1) What are the damages they claim? Do they have any evidence of ground-water contamination, or are they expressing a generalized fear of radioactive materials?**

**2) Are any of the people who are (or have) leased to URI at Kingsville Dome members of STOP and what do they have to say? The people quoted in this article have no special background in the subject and could simply be people who don't like nuclear power under any circumstances.]**

Things have changed since the 1980s, said Richard van Horn, HRI's vice president of operations. HRI's license requires the company to prove it can restore a test mine site in Church Rock before mining in Crownpoint.

"If we can't do it safely," he said, "we won't do it at all."

The Texans aren't convinced, though.

**[This is a blanket statement that gives the impression that all Texans are against uranium mining.]**

"We need to spread the message," said Teo Saens, who now regrets the five-year lease he signed with URI in the 1990s. "You're at the point where we were in '88. You have time to stop them."

**[What was done with his lease? Was it included in the mine? If it was part of the mine, why does he feel this way? Is he disappointed that mining in the US stopped for almost 20 years, or were there actual, irreparable damages done? No information or supporting evidence has been given.]**

## Gathering

On a sunny Thursday morning, they had all gathered on Teddy Nez's front lawn 15 miles north of Church Rock. A pair of long-abandoned uranium ore piles sit quietly a few hundred yards off in either direction, reminders of the mining boom that swept through the area before uranium prices plummeted in the early 1980s. Despite a recent \$2.5 million cleanup by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, radium levels around Nez's home remain dangerously high. They've rendered the cedar, sage and pion he used to treat his colon cancer, diagnosed 1 1/2 years ago, useless. A few miles to the south, URI's New Mexico subsidiary, Hydro Resources Inc., wants to start mining again.

**[ 1) Here the author is discussing the remains of open-pit and/or underground mining, an entirely different technique than is used in Texas. In situ Recovery (ISR) is what is used in Texas. One of the many advantages of ISR is that there are no waste piles of dirt to have to clean up.**

**2) ISR is similar to a water-flood process used in secondary oil recovery. Only ground water is removed, treated to remove the uranium, and re-injected into intervals well below aquifers, just as in re-injecting brine from oil & gas wells.]**

Tempted by the area's prodigious uranium reserves, HRI began buying up land around Church Rock and Crownpoint in the 1980s. Despite a green light from the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, a decade of appeals from local opponents have kept HRI from mining them. Eager to win the locals over, the

company talks of the hundreds of jobs the mines will create and the million in royalties it will earn for allottees. But above all else, it says their water will stay clean.

**[A commendable and normal position taken by the Company]**

Saens has heard it all before. "The promises have all been the same," he said. "They're going to take the uranium and leave (the water) crystal clear." But according to Saens and others, it hasn't quite worked out that way.

**[Specifically, what is the basis for Mr. Saens claims that "it hasn't quite worked out that way" or did the author just make up these comments?]**

Suelda Ortega, who also made the trip from Texas, said uranium levels in her three wells were just barely above government drinking standards before URI started mining her land. Now, she said, they're 20 times above drinking standards. George Rice, a groundwater hydrologist working for STOP, says water in some parts of the mine site are 400 times above what they were before URI started.

**[ 1) No information is given whether the sample analyses are interim cleanup values, or whether URI is still cleaning up the area.**

**2) The uranium levels may have been "just barely above government drinking standards", but this makes it non-drinkable anyway. It might be acceptable for agricultural use, but no information is given.**

**3) One of the biggest misunderstandings with ISR is that many people believe that the ground water will be drinkable when mining is complete. Those areas that contained uranium mineralization before mining did not meet drinking water quality standards, and not just because of the presence of uranium but associated constituents as well, such as selenium, molybdenum, iron, etc.]**

## **Water Contamination**

Company officials say the rising levels have nothing to do with their mining, that the water is being contaminated by the natural release of uranium from the surrounding rock. But that uranium has been lodged to those rocks for centuries. The company's opponents refuse to believe that so much of it would leave the rock on its own in two relatively short decades.

**[ 1) Uranium in South Texas occurs in "roll-front deposits". These deposits (and the associated ground water) constantly move, albeit very slowly. They are the result of chemical and biological reactions. These reactions result in a constant dissolving and re-precipitating of the uranium minerals.**

**2) Pumping a water well that is near or in one of these deposits can actually cause the dissolving of the uranium, causing an increase in uranium concentrations. Of course, these wells would not be permitted by the State as a source of drinking water.]**

Kleberg County has even threatened to sue URI over an alleged breach of contract. In 2004, URI agreed to restore any clean wells in the two areas it already mined before starting to mine a third. It started mining the new site in January even though one well in the other two remains contaminated. The

company says it's found new data that proves the well was contaminated to begin with. Opponents find that suspiciously convenient.

**[Unfortunately, this is not unusual. Studies have been done that show that wells that are in or near uranium deposits were not of drinking water quality before any mining or even exploration took place. There is nothing "suspiciously convenient" about it.]**

As for jobs, the Kingsville Economic Development Council's Richard Messbarger says URI hired every drilling rig it could find, employing up to 200 people at a time. But except for "a token few," Saens said, the company hired most of them from outside the area.

**[Maybe there is a good reason why locals were not hired. Maybe the locals didn't have the qualifications. Working on a drill rig is not easy.]**

Van Horn said he would probably be able to fill more than three quarters of the 400 or so jobs he'd need if mining ever starts up again here locally. But like STOP in Texas, ENDAUM the Eastern Navajo Din Against Uranium Mining is urging locals not to buy in.

**[Is the author actually encouraging locals not to apply for the available jobs?]**

"We have a lot of things in common with them," ENDAUM President Mitchell Capitan said of his Texas counterparts.

**[What are these commonalities? Most of New Mexico's uranium deposits were mined using totally different methods than that in Kingsville.]**

ENDAUM's appeals to the NRC and more recently the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals have stymied HRI's efforts but failed to bring them to a halt.

**[Maybe ENDAUM's claims were without merit?]**

It's made even less progress with the 400 allottees sitting on HRI's Unit 1 site just outside of Crownpoint. While HRI bought its other three sites in the area from private companies, it needs each of the allottees on Unit 1 to sign a lease.

Capitan had hopes that the Texans would have a chance to share their stories with those allottees before leaving. But during a Thursday afternoon luncheon organized for the group at Crownpoint's St. Paul Parish Hall, he said, they ended up preaching to a roomful of converts. He's glad at least that the group managed to snag a few hours of air time on KTNN and KYVA.

**[These are biased statements. The author wants the reader to believe that anyone who's in favor of uranium mining has been duped by the company.]**

But it's an uphill battle for ENDAUM.

Benjamin House, president of the Eastern Navajo Allottees Association, and a paid mining advocate for HRI, says most of the 400 allottees signed leases with the company in the early 1990s, although the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs has yet to approve them.

Although Bell, Saens and the others left Saturday, Capitan said the two groups would continue to collaborate. ENDAUM, he said, was already planning an August trip to Kingsville to see URI's Texas operations for itself.

**[ Hopefully, ENDAUM will discover that ISR is a much safer method for mining uranium than open pit or underground mining. Hopefully ENDAUM will approach this trip with an open mind and with a minimum of ill-conceived impressions.]**