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Twenty Years of
Environmental
Victories

Spring 2007

Green Fire Report

A publication of the New Mexico Environmental Law Center, a non-profit, public-interest law firm dedicated to protecting New Mexico's environment and communities

Why Nuclear Power Is Not the Answer

Steven Capra, Executive Director of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, and Ben Luce, Ph.D., Chair and Policy Director of the Coalition for Clean and Affordable Energy

Excerpted from *New Mexico Wild!*, Winter 2007, a publication of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance.

As global warming becomes the hottest topic on the environmental radar and energy use continues to soar, the resurgence of the nuclear power industry has taken center stage. Many say that nuclear power is the key to our energy future and limiting global warming.

Nevertheless, before we jump to conclusions, let's take a closer look at the new wave of nuclear power plants so strongly advocated by many in Congress, a handful of conservationists, and much of the well-meaning public. This will help us to better understand the potential impact of nuclear power plants on America's, and for that matter, the world's energy future.

THE MONEY PIT

For more than 50 years, the nuclear industry has been heavily subsidized by your federal tax dollars to a tune of \$66 billion for research and development alone. Yet today no construction can occur without massive federal subsidies. In addition, in 2005 Congress renewed the Price-Anderson Nuclear Industries Indemnity Act, which covers all



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Uranium Case Goes to Federal Court

On February 12, the Law Center filed a landmark lawsuit in federal court aimed at derailing proposed uranium mining in and near the communities of Crownpoint and Church Rock.

The lawsuit comes after our clients, the Eastern Navajo Diné Against Uranium Mining (ENDAUM) and the Southwest Research and Information Center (SRIC) lost a decade-long bid to overturn a uranium mining license granted to Hydro Resources, Inc. (HRI) by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC).

"*Tó eii be'íná át'é* – 'Water is life,'" stated Lynnea Smith, Executive Director of ENDAUM, when the suit was filed. "The NRC has ignored our communities for more than a decade as we have fought to protect the resource that is most important to us. Have no doubt about it – we will continue to fight for the purity of our water for generations to come."

The petition for review, filed in the U.S. Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals in Denver, asks the Court to review numerous decisions

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issued by the NRC during the past ten years. Lead attorney Eric Jantz argues that the Agency violated the Atomic Energy Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and its own regulations when it issued decisions on numerous issues.

Outlining details of the case, Jantz explains that the Agency issued a license to the mining company despite the fact that the company failed to prove that it would

- ❖ protect groundwater from contamination by uranium and other heavy metals — even though the water is the sole source of drinking water for nearly 15,000 residents;
- ❖ ensure that the health of residents near the mines would be protected from damaging radiological air emissions, despite the fact that the area already exceeds federal radioactivity standards due to past mining contamination;
- ❖ post an adequate bond to ensure that the site would be cleaned up in the event that the company is unable to reclaim the land or water impacted by the mining — although no mine of this type has ever been reclaimed to baseline levels.

Jantz continues, "Our clients stand a much better chance of protecting Navajo communities from unsafe uranium mining in federal court, which is unburdened by the pro-industry bias exhibited by the NRC."

This case should be completely briefed by late summer. We expect a decision from the Court in 2008.

— Staff Attorney Eric Jantz

NAVAJO COMMUNITIES WIN VICTORY IN FRONT OF E.P.A.

On February 6, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of the Interior determined that HRI's Church Rock Section 8 property is Indian Country for the purposes of enforcing the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Uranium Ban Will Apply

This important decision places jurisdiction to enforce the Drinking Water Act with the Federal government or the Navajo Nation. Significantly, this determination of Indian Country means that the *Diné Natural Resources Protection Act* applies to this parcel of land and **uranium mining and processing is therefore prohibited under Navajo law**.

Unfortunately this issue is not yet over. In March, HRI appealed the EPA decision to the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals. The Law Center's clients intend to file a friend of the court brief with the Court of Appeals urging that the EPA's determination be upheld.

— Staff Attorney Eric Jantz

"The NRC has ignored our communities for more than a decade as we have fought to protect the resource that is most important to us. Have no doubt about it – we will continue to fight for the purity of our water for generations to come."

— Lynnea Smith, Executive Director of ENDAUM

LAW CENTER PREPARES FOR PRECEDENT-SETTING LANDFILL HEARING

With a population of only 6,300 people, the *colonia* of Chaparral is home to two landfills, a sewage reclamation plant, a sewage sludge disposal site, a sand and gravel operation, a hazardous waste container storage facility, an electric power plant and a natural gas plant. Rhino Environmental Services is seeking to build another landfill in Chaparral, less than half a mile from homes.

Public Testimony is 'Irrelevant'

In September 2001, hundreds of the town's residents packed the middle school auditorium for several nights to participate in the public hearing. Many testified about negative impacts that they feared would accompany the dump, including groundwater contamination, air pollution and health impacts. Resident Jim See testified to another concern voiced by many residents, "Haven't we done our part? Why another dump? I ask this question, is this really a case of gouging a large hole [in] Chaparral's backyard for a dump, because the people happen to be poor, hard working and unable to financially fight such a development?"

To their shock, the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) Hearing Officer stated during the proceeding that their non-technical testimony was "irrelevant" to the Agency's decision. The NMED then proceeded to issue the permit to the landfill company.

Community Wins Landmark Decision

Outraged by the State's open disregard for overwhelming public opposition to the landfill, the Colonias Development Council (CDC) appealed the decision, ultimately arguing its case before the New Mexico Supreme Court. With help from Law Center attorneys, the CDC emerged with a precedent-setting decision from the Supreme Court justices in 2005. In their decision, the justices stated that "The [Environment] Department's review must include



PUBLIC IGNORED IN VULCAN CONCRETE PLANT CASE

After over a year of litigating, the appeal of the Vulcan concrete plant air permit is over.

The appeal was filed by Law Center Staff Attorney Sarah Piltch on behalf of the Law Center's clients, the Mountain View Neighborhood Association, the South Valley Coalition of Neighborhood Associations, and several individuals. **It was the first appeal ever filed to the Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Air Quality Control Board.**

Not One Neighbor in Favor

In addition to the technical witnesses presented by our clients at hearings in May 2006 and January 2007, forty-seven community members spoke out against the facility during the public comment periods of the May hearing. **Not one community member spoke in favor of the facility.**

On March 14, 2007 the Board met, deliberated and decided to narrowly modify Vulcan's permit, requiring wheel washes on the haul roads into and out of the facility. Unfortunately, it was far removed from the goal of our clients, who had argued for a denial of the permit. The Board also disregarded our clients' requests for many other conditions to the permit, including reduced operating hours and additional monitoring and reporting requirements.

One Bright Spot

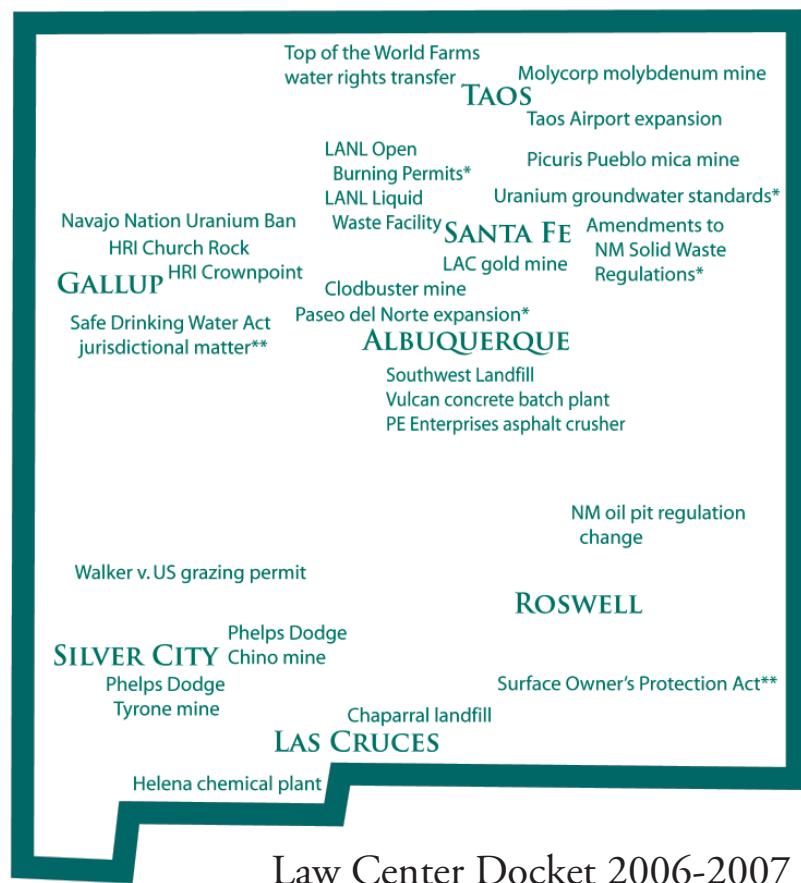
One bright spot in this case was our success in reducing the fee to file an appeal with the Board. Originally charged \$1,000 to challenge the permit, the Board ultimately refunded the fee when our clients showed that it was a financial hardship. Thanks to our efforts, the regulations have been changed, and the fee for an appeal has been lowered to \$150.



The Law Center's clients continue to oppose the construction of the Vulcan concrete batch plant across the street from their community center, and are considering their future steps and strategies.

— Staff Attorney Sarah Piltch

— Development Officer Shelbie Knox



Law Center Docket 2006-2007

*denotes cases closed in 2006 | **denotes cases closed in 2007

consideration of public testimony about the proposed landfill's adverse impact on a community's quality of life." This is the first decision in New Mexico affirming that quality of life must be taken into account when the Environment Department considers the issuance of a permit.

In addition, the Court ordered that the Environment Department reopen the public testimony portion of the hearing. Law Center Director Douglas Meiklejohn is representing the CDC as it prepares for the hearing this summer. This hearing is particularly important because it is the first test of the Environment Department under the Supreme Court's new interpretation of the NM Solid Waste Act. We will be fighting hard to ensure that the State seriously considers public testimony before reissuing its decision on the Rhino permit, **since its process will not only affect the residents of Chaparral, but also all solid waste permitting decisions in the State for years to come.**

FOR MORE CASES AND THE LATEST UPDATES, CHECK OUT WWW.NMENVIROLAW.ORG/NEWS.

WHY NUCLEAR ISN'T THE ANSWER *continued from page 1.*

non-military nuclear facilities constructed in the United States before 2026. The Act establishes a no fault insurance-type system in which the first \$10 billion is industry-funded, should an accident occur, but any claims above that figure would be paid by the federal government. Sandia Laboratory calculated in 2004 that the cost of a serious nuclear plant accident would likely run \$600 billion or more.

**In 2000, a pound
of uranium cost
less than \$10. In
April 2007, that
same pound of
uranium costs
\$113.**

**Existing nuclear
power plant waste:**

**52,000 tons
spent radioactive fuel**

**91,000,000 gallons
high-level radioactive
waste from plutonium
reprocessing**

**500,000+ tons
depleted uranium**

**265 million tons
uranium tailings**

**millions of tons
low-level radioactive
contaminated items
from power plants**

In the 2005 Energy Bill, according to the non-profit group Public Citizen, the nuclear industry was the clear winner, raking in more than \$12 billion in subsidies. This includes tax credits for each kilowatt-hour of nuclear generated energy produced from new reactors during the first eight years of operation. It is projected that this will cost the US Treasury more than \$5.7 billion in lost revenue. The bill also authorized a \$2 billion "risk insurance" to pay industry for any delays in construction of new power plants. To compare, the oil and gas industry received about \$6 billion in subsidies, while the coal industry got \$9 billion. However, it is clear that it isn't solely building nuclear plants that required subsidies, but also keeping them in operation.

MINING, REFINING AND THE REALITIES OF GLOBAL WARMING

Many have argued that nuclear power is the key to stopping global warming because nuclear power does not generate carbon dioxide and it slows the consumption of fossil fuels. Nevertheless, there are some serious problems with this hypothesis. First, the cost of nuclear power is simply not viable or sustainable.

Second, any major expansion of nuclear power would require a complementary development of uranium mining. This would quickly deplete the supply of high-grade ores, in turn causing tremendous pressure to mine uranium wherever it could be found. This could lead to potentially disastrous environmental impacts from *in-situ* leach mining (aka pumping chemical solutions into the ground to force out uranium-rich solutions). This type of mining presents a major threat to various aquifers, including those in New Mexico. With uranium prices eclipsing \$62.50 a pound [*editor's note -- since this article originally went to press in December, 2006, the price of uranium has risen to \$113 per pound*], people are pushing for access to lands across the West. Companies seeing a modern day uranium rush are staking claims to the boundaries of the Navajo Nation, which Mark Pelizza, vice president of Uranium Resources, Inc. (URI), calls the "Saudi Arabia of Uranium." URI could start mining in Church Rock in 2008; if they convince regulators that the work is environmentally sound, they could also begin mining in Crownpoint.

The Navajo Nation is saying "no" to such efforts. Two years ago it passed a ban on mining or processing uranium in "Navajo Indian Country," a term designed to safeguard the reservation and neighboring communities. But despite the ban, the uranium companies continue to push for access, forcing tribal President Joe Shirley, Jr. to sign an executive order that instructed all tribal employees to "avoid any communication with uranium company employees." However, the Navajo Nation remains poor and the uranium companies are banking on that to shift perception their way in order to gain access. They continue to push their agenda with lobbying efforts in Washington to increase accessibility while keeping uranium prices sky-high. From the Navajo perspective, no mining can occur when there remain more than 1,000 unreclaimed uranium mines and no funds to clean them up. The Navajo continue to fight: protesting, educating their people, and going to Washington.

In terms of global warming, it is true that nuclear power is a cleaner source of energy than coal fired plants or even natural gas, because nukes don't produce carbon dioxide (if you ignore the mining.) But to have a tangible impact on global warming would require a major construction undertaking. In order to displace fossil fuels worldwide, we would need to construct 10,000-30,000 new nuclear power plants to produce the needed 12.8 trillion watts of world energy. Remember, today there are slightly



more than 400 existing plants. While many can argue that it's a positive step to get more nuclear power online to reduce greenhouse gases, if we refocus our energy priorities, we can obtain the same results by conserving and using alternative energy sources.

"Once again, it's time to infuse some sanity into the energy debate. Perhaps with this Congress we can turn a page...one that for the first time makes energy development and production compatible with clean air, water and stronger communities."

DISPOSAL

Let's take a look at that messy problem of disposing of radioactive waste produced by nuclear power plants. According to a recent article in National Geographic, currently in the US there are more than 52,000 tons of spent radioactive fuel from our nation's commercial and defense nuclear reactors. There are also more than 91 million gallons of high-level waste left over from plutonium processing, scores of tons of plutonium, more than half a million tons of depleted uranium, and millions of cubic feet of contaminated tools, metal scraps, clothing, oils, solvents and other wastes. In addition, there are more than 265 million tons of tailings from milling uranium ore. The government's solution is to transport some of the low-level waste to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) facility just east of Carlsbad. But the more ambitious proposal is to build a repository at Yucca Mountain in Nevada.

Yucca Mountain is located only 80 miles northwest of Las Vegas. It is the only US site currently proposed to store more than 77,000 tons of high-level radioactive waste from US weapons sites and commercial nuclear reactors. The nuclear industry has thus far succeeded, thanks to a very aggressive lobbying effort, to overturn Nevada's veto of the Yucca Mountain proposal in 2002. Yet to date, numerous scientific, economic and policy problems continue to plague the Yucca Mountain project. The proposed dump faces an uncertain future in upcoming regulatory, legislative and legal processes. Meanwhile, the waste pile continues to grow at existing nuclear power plants and the security of those plants remains questionable.

THE FUTURE

Starting with Congress, it is essential that we begin to seriously fund alternative energy sources. We do not need nuclear power to fight global warming, nor do we need it to supply our growing energy demands. We have vast renewable energy sources, especially wind and solar energy, which dwarf the potential of nuclear power. Energy efficiency is also the key to our energy future. However, it begins with an Apollo-like investment in alternative energy. Let's put \$12 billion or so into solar research and development every year for the next ten years. Let's also put serious money into energy efficiency and designing automobiles that get 200-300 miles per gallon.

Renewable energy is now growing without serious government support at a rate of 30-40% per year in virtually all sectors. These energy sources are developing without the threat of terrorists, contamination, waste disposal issues and are also helping to make communities more self-sufficient. They are also creating long-term employment for people across the country. Will alternatives be enough to stop global warming? The jury is still out. But it will clearly be alternative energy sources that make America cleaner and less dependent on Middle-East oil and politics, while creating energy that does not threaten global stability. Much like electric cars, there are special interests that do not want power generation that is not centralized and full of government subsidies.

Once again, it's time to infuse some sanity into the energy debate. Perhaps with this Congress we can turn a page...one that for the first time makes energy development and production compatible with clean air, water and stronger communities.

See this article in its entirety, including its discussion about nuclear proliferation and security issues, at www.nmenvirolaw.org/news, or at www.nmwild.org. Our thanks to the NM Wilderness Alliance and the Coalition for Clean and Affordable Energy for sharing this article.

2007 LEGISLATIVE SESSION PRODUCES MIXED RESULTS

This year's legislative session had the usual mix of the good, the bad and the ugly. *The Law Center's efforts in the session were aided considerably by the volunteer work done by Don Goldman, who reviewed bills as they were introduced and brought to our attention those that could impact communities or the environment. We are grateful to Don for his assistance.*

PROTECTIVE LEGISLATION

First, the Law Center and its legislative partners, the Oil and Gas Accountability Project and the New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association, were able to pass the *New Mexico Surface Owner Protection Act* (SOPA), sponsored by Sen. Phil Griego. While the Bill that was eventually signed into law by Governor Richardson was a compromise between the surface owner advocates and the oil and gas industry, the SOPA goes a long way to protect surface owners from environmental and property damage done by oil and gas operations on their land. In fact, the New Mexico SOPA is the strongest surface owner protection act in the country.

Second, the Law Center, the Environmental Justice Working Group of the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice, and other environmental justice advocacy organizations worked for passage of the *New Mexico Environmental Health Act*. This bill, which was sponsored by Sen. Linda Lopez and Rep. Miguel Garcia, would have required that the State Environment Department take into account the impacts of its decisions on communities, something that the Department currently does not do except in limited circumstances.

The bill was quickly killed in the Senate by the industry-friendly Conservation Committee. After it became apparent that House Bill 888 would fail as well, the Law Center and the E.J. Working Group drafted House Memorial 97, which passed. **The Memorial calls for the State Environment Department to determine how it can take into account the impacts of its decisions on communities.** It is not yet clear what process the Department will use to make this determination, but we at the Law Center and the Environmental Justice Working Group intend to be involved in the Department's consideration of the issue.



HARMFUL LEGISLATION

Fortunately the Law Center and its allies were able to stop a particularly noxious memorial introduced by freshman senator David Ulibarri. The *Nuclear Energy and Uranium Resources Joint Memorial* sought to welcome the uranium mining industry into New Mexico. Further, the Memorial directed the State to "remove all regulatory barriers" to uranium mining in New Mexico. We are happy to report that the Law Center and a coalition of native, environmental and clean energy groups were able to kill the memorial before it reached the Senate floor. However, as uranium prices keep climbing, similar measures undoubtedly will be introduced in future sessions.

Another principal piece of negative legislation that was considered during the session was House Bill 685, the *Administrative Accountability Act*. Sponsored by Rep. Daniel Silva and backed by the New Mexico Mining Association, the Association of Commerce and Industry, and others, **the Bill would have curtailed the ability of State regulatory agencies to provide meaningful protection for communities and the environment.** Among its other provisions, the Bill as originally introduced would have

- prevented state agencies from conducting unannounced inspections of regulated facilities;
- required agencies to make public the names of whistle blowers;
- prohibited agencies from putting conditions into permits unless they were specifically authorized by statute; and
- required agencies to pay fines if they failed to comply with the Bill's requirements.

Although we and our allies got the Bill killed in committee, industry groups were able to persuade the Legislature to pass two memorials. These memorials, which were identical as introduced by Sen. Ben Altamirano and Rep. Al Park, call for the establishment of a task force to review and make recommendations concerning procedures used by state administrative agencies. Before the Senate Memorial was passed, however, it was amended by Sen. Linda Lopez to include, among others, two representatives of environmental justice communities.

It is not clear how the differences between the two memorials will be resolved or whether there will be two task forces. Each memorial calls for the task force it establishes to report to the appropriate interim legislative committee in the fall of this year. Find out more about the makeup of these committees on our website at www.nmenvirolaw.org/news.





PLEASE JOIN US IN WELCOMING OUR NEW STAFF MEMBERS

Sebia Hawkins, Development Director



Sebia brings to the Law Center a twenty-five year track record in fundraising, networking, communications, and advocacy for disenfranchised communities. She moved to Santa Fe in 1996 from Washington D.C., where she served for nine years as Greenpeace International's Pacific Campaign Co-Coordinator, where the environmental and public health impacts of nuclear weapons production and chemical weapons destruction were central to her work. Global warming has also topped her list of priorities for the past twenty years, with a strong focus on how climate change impacts the environment, societies and economies in the Pacific Islands region. Sebia also participated in Greenpeace US's internal organizational work on diversity and environmental justice issues in the early 1990s, and then worked for the Federated States of Micronesia between 1999-2003. "Coral reef destruction, the loss of fisheries and the loss of fresh water resources are creating the world's first climate refugees in the Pacific," she says, "but global warming is going to affect everyone on the planet, starting with the least powerful communities in fragile environments – just like we have in New Mexico."

Through her environmental justice work, Sebia came to know many of New Mexico's environmental justice leaders and issues of concern in northern New Mexico. For the past ten years, she has worked as a consultant, board member and volunteer for numerous New Mexico non-profit organizations that focus on the environment, environmental justice, and sustainable community issues. She looks forward to becoming well-acquainted with the Law Center's members, and is already working diligently to build the organization's fundraising and communications capacity.

Juana Colón, Office Manager

Juana moved to Santa Fe from Brooklyn, NY where she lived for 10 years. She moved to Brooklyn from Buffalo, NY in the hopes of putting her degree in Art History to use, but over time became disenchanted with the Big City. After completing her masters degree in archaeology in 2005, Juana wanted to find a community that was interested in serving the indigenous cultural landscape as well as preserving the ecological one. If you ask her why she came to New Mexico, she'll say "I needed more sky in my life."

At the Law Center, Juana has found a place to contribute her many talents along with feeding her passion for the protection of the environment and encouraging sustainable living. Her hobbies include weaving, baking, enjoying the outdoors with friends and trying to find new uses for old things. She believes she has found a home in Santa Fe and at the Law Center.



Did you know that you can donate stocks, bonds and securities to the Law Center?

The Law Center welcomes gifts of publicly traded stocks, cash, bonds and mutual funds. In fact, securities which have an unrealized long term capital gain (held longer than one year) are often a more effective gift than cash! Because the Law Center is a tax-exempt organization, it does not pay capital gains taxes on appreciated stock gifts, meaning New Mexico's environment gets the most out of your gift!

In order for the Law Center to acknowledge your gift and for audit purposes, please provide the Law Center with the following information: Donor's name and address, the name and number of securities transferred, and your broker's contact information. Once we have this information, we will send you the name and contact information for our broker, and the account routing number necessary for the transfer. Please contact Yana Merrill, Director of Administration and Finance, at 505.989.9022 ext. 25, if you have any questions or would like to make a gift!

Mission

The New Mexico Environmental Law Center is a nonprofit, public interest law firm that provides free and low-cost legal services on environmental matters throughout New Mexico. The mission of the Law Center is to protect New Mexico's environment and communities. Founded in 1987, the Law Center works with clients -- often individuals, neighborhood associations, environmental organizations, Tribes and Pueblos -- seeking to protect the environment. The work of the Law Center is made possible by tax-deductible contributions from individuals, businesses, foundations and limited earned income.

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FAREWELLS

Goodbye to Staff Attorney Roderick Ventura

The Law Center announces the departure of Rod Ventura, who served as our Senior Staff Attorney for four years. Rod was an important member of our legal team, with an impressive list of achievements. Among some of his accomplishments for communities in New Mexico were his work on the legal team that negotiated for the return of aboriginal lands to Picuris Pueblo, his successful negotiation for a stringent air quality permit for the Helena chemical plant in Mesquite, and his key role in the adoption of environmentally-strong permits for the



Law Center Director Dougla Meiklejohn with Roderick Ventura (right).

Phelps Dodge copper mines in Grant County and Molycorp mine near Questa. We will certainly miss him, and wish him the best in his new endeavors at the New Mexico Department of Public Education.

Law Center Bids Adieu to Board Members Hurley and deBuys

The Law Center also bids farewells to board members Joanna Hurley and William (Bill) deBuys. Joanna, who is the owner of HurleyMedia in Santa Fe, did a wonderful job helping the Law Center with our public relations since coming on our board in 2002. She has also served with distinction on our development committee. Bill joined our board in 2005. He offered us the benefit of his broad knowledge of non-profit management, as well as his deep wisdom and thoughtful eloquence about the environment in which we live. We sincerely thank Joanna and Bill for their service to the Law Center, and to the environment and communities of New Mexico.

In Memoriam – Wilfred Rael

The Law Center is profoundly sorry to report the death of Wilfred Rael of Questa, a long time advocate for protection of New Mexico's water resources generally and acequia systems in particular. Wilfred was a gentle man who worked for years to restore the Red River, which was polluted by the Molycorp mine in Questa, and who advocated tirelessly for the protection of New Mexico's acequia systems.

Wilfred's work for New Mexico's ground and surface water was the basis for the Law Center's 1992 award to him of the first Karl Souder Award for protection of New Mexico's water resources. In his speech accepting that Award, Wilfred said: "Our enemy is the product of greed, and it thrives on poverty, apathy, ignorance, and a lack of education." Wilfred understood the forces that he was working against, and he was willing to name them. We will all miss him as we work to continue his legacy.



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Bonnie Frost
Fred Hampton
Conrad House
Keith Kellum
Patrick Sandlin
Kathleen Sisneros

GIFTS MADE IN HONOR OF:
The work done by ENDAUM

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Find out about the *recent major development* in the Law Center's HRI uranium case inside.

To: Eastern Navajo Dine Against Uranium Mining (ENDAUM)
Subject: Your march April 24, 2007

Our hearts are with you this morning as you demonstrate your concerns about uranium mining in your communities. We would be with you in person if we could. Today we are also fighting our common enemy, Uranium Resources, Inc. (which wholly owns Hydro Resources, Inc.), at the Texas state capitol in Austin.



Our Navajo clients met with solidarity from residents in Texas, who are fighting an existing *in situ* leach uranium mine operated by HRI's parent company, Uranium Resources, Inc. in Kingsville, TX. Above, Attorney Eric Jantz in front of the HRI's Crownpoint plant.

We have been both seduced and deceived by URI's lies about the safety of its mining operation, and its false promises of restoration.

When our people signed the uranium leases, they were told that the mining would leave the water cleaner than it had ever been. The state has told us many times that it would protect our air, our land, and our groundwater.

In truth, our groundwater has been contaminated by uranium mining with no hope of ever being restored. Our land has been contaminated and we see no future where we will ever be able to farm it again. Our air is contaminated with radon and its poisons. Our people daily live with fear.

In the past two months there have been two explosions at the URI plant near Kingsville. URI has denied the truth about those explosions to state and federal inspectors. Many spills of thousands of gallons of contaminated liquids are recorded in state files. URI continues to refuse to honor its promise to restore previously mined fields.

We see the hunger for profit at the expense of the earth and its gifts. We see the disregard for human and animal lives. We see the corruption of elected officials and state employees.

On this day when you, our neighbors in New Mexico, stand against the evils of uranium mining, we stand with you. We are proud to be called your friends and allies.

Signed: Members of South Texas Opposes Pollution (STOP)

 New Mexico
Environmental Law Center

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