

Uranium Mining - what you can do

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FACT SHEET

Old & New Uranium Mining in the Upper Midwest

1. Uranium mining in South Dakota, Wyoming, Montana, and North Dakota began in the middle of the 1950s. World War II, which had ended the previous decade with the nuclear bomb, and the advent of nuclear energy for the production of electricity for use in homes and businesses, caused the price of uranium to rise. As the economy of the foregoing states depends primarily on agriculture, many get-rich schemes were quick to be adopted when uranium was discovered in the region. Not only were large mining companies chopping off the tops of bluffs and tables, but small individual ranchers were also digging in their pastures for the radioactive metal. Mining occurred on both public and private land, although the Great Sioux Nation still maintains a claim to the area through the Fort Laramie Treaties of 1851 and 1868.

2. In northwestern South Dakota, the Sioux Ranger District, as an example, is managed by Custer National Forest and currently contains 89 abandoned open-pit uranium mines. Studies show that one mine alone has 1800 mR of exposed radiation with no warning signs posted for the general public at the entrance. More than 1,000 open-pit uranium mines and prospects can be found in the four state region according to a map by the US Forest Service.

3. The following agencies are aware of these abandoned uranium mines and prospects: US Forest Service, US Environmental Protection Agency, US Bureau of Land Management, SD Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the US Indian Health Service, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe.

4. The water runoff from the (Sioux Ranger District) Cave Hills abandoned uranium mines empties into the Grand River which flows through the Standing Rock Indian Reservation. Three villages are located on the Grand River and their residents have used the water for drinking and other domestic purposes. One village still uses the water for drinking and domestic purposes. The water runoff from the (Sioux Ranger District) Slim Buttes abandoned uranium mines empty into the Morreau River which flows through the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation. Four villages are located on the Morreau River. No data is currently available about their use of the Morreau River water.

5. In 1972, President Richard Nixon signed an Executive Order in secret declaring this four-state region of the country to be a "National Sacrifice Area" for the mining and production of uranium and nuclear energy.

6. In southwestern South Dakota, the southern Black Hills contain many abandoned uranium mines. Nuclear radiation near Edgemont, SD, polluted the underground water of the Pine Ridge

Indian Reservation according to a study completed in the 1980s by Women of All Red Nations.

7. In 2006, the South Dakota legislature passed two laws to allow: 'In Situ Leaching' for uranium in which a liquid is forced into the earth to bring up the uranium. Accidents, or breaks in the pipe create nuclear pollution of aquifers. The second law that was passed without public comment, input, or hearings allows the building of nuclear power plants anyplace in South Dakota.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Inform yourself about nuclear radiation and whether you have any abandoned or current uranium mining in your area.
2. Write letters to your United States Senators and Representatives encouraging them to put a ban on all nuclear development, and demand that your tax dollars be put into the development of clean and healthy alternative energy sources such as wind and solar power. Inform them also that the disposal of nuclear wastes is still a problem. The United States, the world, and the future generations do not need any more nuclear waste.
3. If you live in South Dakota, write a letter to Gov. Mike Rounds, 500 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, SD 57501-3212, telling him that South Dakota and its people, animals, birds, plants, and environment are not to be sacrificed for uranium no matter how much money is brought into the state.
4. If you live in South Dakota, contact your local state Senators and Representatives requesting them to stop the implementation of Senate Bill 61, the In Situ Leaching bill for Uranium, and House Concurrent Resolution 1010 which allows nuclear power plants to be built anywhere in the state. It has long been proven how dangerous nuclear radiation is to the public and the environment.
5. If you live outside of South Dakota, write a letter to Gov. Mike Rounds, 500 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, SD 57501-3212, telling him that although you would like to visit the state and see Mount Rushmore and the Black Hills, you will not come to South Dakota until all of the abandoned uranium mines in the four-state region are cleaned up and there is no pollution in the water, on the land, or in the animals.
6. Write to South Dakota Senators Tim Johnson and John Thune, and Representative Stephanie Herseth informing them that South Dakota and its people, animals, birds, plants, and environment are not to be sacrificed for uranium no matter how much money is brought into the state. Also encourage them to take the lead on a federal ban on all nuclear development, and demand that your tax dollars be put into the development of clean and healthy alternative energy sources such as wind and solar power. South Dakota has more than enough wind and solar energy that has not been tapped.

7. Write, email, or fax a letter to your Senators and Representatives, and the President of the United States urging them to pass special federal legislation for the clean-up of the more than 1,000 abandoned uranium mines and prospects in the center of the nation. The consequences of the mining of uranium forty years ago must be stopped. No part of the United States should be sacrificed for nuclear development or energy. The United States' "secret Chernobyl" must be cleaned up before any more harm is done to humans, animals, birds, crops, and the environment of the North American continent.

8. To view pictures of the Cave Hills and Slim Buttes abandoned uranium mines go to <http://spaces.msn.com/uraniummine/>