



Technical Assistance Services for Communities

Cove Area Abandoned Uranium Mines

June 2015 Cove Wash Sampling

Preliminary Findings Summary – March 2016

In June 2015, U.S. EPA, in coordination with Navajo Nation EPA (NNEPA) and the Diné College Environmental Institute, sampled soil, sediment and water across the Cove Wash Watershed. Activities included collecting water, groundwater and sediment samples. The goal was to identify potential areas of concern and sources of contamination. The sampling included 46 sites, 55 streams, 51 sediment areas, and five wells and springs downstream or next to abandoned uranium mines (AUMs). This was the first time the entire watershed has been sampled.

Preliminary Findings

Radionuclides, total uranium, radium and gross alpha radiation were analyzed. Sampling results from Mesas 1, 2, 4, 4.5 and 5 show that **humans should not use streams, springs and wells as sources of drinking water**. It is not known yet if this applies to livestock as well. U.S. EPA needs to return to some additional areas that were not accessible during the first round of sampling. Additional questions that need more study include:

- Are there seasonal variations in radionuclides?
- Are natural sources or AUM mines contributing most to the contamination?
- Are there impacts on agricultural and grazing activities?

Next Steps

With these questions in mind, EPA will study dams, irrigation water and snowmelt in the spring of 2016. **Signs identifying wells that are not safe for drinking will also be put in place during this time.** U.S. EPA will coordinate with other partners such as NNEPA, the Navajo Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) Department, the Cove community, local universities, and other federal, state and local government agencies to analyze the results and keep the community informed. U.S. EPA will also coordinate current sampling findings with previous efforts at AUMs in the area.

COVE WASH SAMPLING COMMUNITY INFORMATION MEETING

March 26, 2016
9:00 a.m.
Cove Chapter House

A group presentation will begin at 9:00 a.m., with opportunity for one on one discussions to follow. Lunch will be served.



Walking to hard-to-reach areas for sampling.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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