Reclaiming Past Mistakes: 
Trends in Uranium Contamination Cleanup on the Navajo Nation

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**Abstract**

From 1944-1986, the federal government contracted mining companies to extract four million tons of uranium ore from the Navajo Nation. Mining companies employed Navajo miners without warning them of the deleterious health and environmental effects of radioactive contamination. After operations concluded, they left behind more than 500 abandoned mine claims with uranium, radium and other radionuclides. It was not until 2007, at the request of the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform that an interagency effort was made to address the contamination. The goal of this research is to evaluate the cleanup of these abandoned uranium mines by researching the history of uranium mining and analyzing the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Five-Year Plan cleanup. After examining maps from the U.S. Geological Survey and Atlas, and analyzing uranium production, proximity to mill sites, host rock, and gamma radiation, results indicate that the cleanup of Skyline Mine, the only completed EPA project was selective and an expression of environmental injustice. In order to achieve a more expedient rate of cleanup, this study suggests arriving at settlements with reliable parties, increasing communication with Navajos and encouraging the formation of grass roots organizations. This study underscores the history of environmental injustice on the Navajo Nation and offers a perspective of its future.