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Secretary Curry Issues Statement on Environmental Protections Related To Renewed Uranium Mining in New Mexico

New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry issued the following statement today after Uranium Resources, Inc. announced its intentions to enter into an agreement with BHP Billiton to acquire Rio Algom Mining LLC. The acquisition could lead to renewed uranium mining near Grants, N.M.

“Before beginning operation, any uranium mine or mill must apply for and receive a groundwater discharge permit from the New Mexico Environment Department,” Secretary Curry said. “In addition, any in situ leach operation will require an Underground Injection Control permit. Those permits are specifically designed to protect New Mexico's precious, limited groundwater resources — the source of 90 percent of our clean drinking water. Those permits also include bonding and other requirements to ensure that funds are available for necessary cleanups related to the mining. The permitting process prescribes numerous chances for public input and transparency including public meetings and hearings. New Mexico has an unfortunate history of contamination from past uranium mining and milling and several clean ups are ongoing in the Ambrosia Lake area, including at the Rio Algom site. That is why NMED plans to carefully and thoroughly vet all proposals to restart uranium mining and processing in New Mexico to ensure the health of residents and our water is protected.”

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