



# OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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## **Pueblo of Acoma Statement**

### **Meeting with the New Mexico Mining & Minerals Division**

### **Regarding the proposed Laramide – La Jara Mesa Mining Project**

### **December 19, 2024**

Good morning. My name is Randall Vicente, and I am the Governor of the Pueblo of Acoma.

Before we begin your presentation and our discussion, I appreciate the opportunity to address the New Mexico Mining and Minerals Division staff regarding the La Jara Mesa Project.

I want to be direct and clear: The Pueblo of Acoma strongly opposes this project. Our opposition stems from deep concerns about environmental justice, water resources, and cultural preservation.

The proposed site sits within an area already bearing the weight of uranium mining's toxic legacy. Directly across the road from this project lies a contaminated legacy site - a stark reminder of promises broken and landscapes poisoned. Upstream on the San Mateo Creek lies another toxic uranium mine. We cannot and will not accept Acoma being treated as a downstream and downwind sacrifice zone for yet another uranium project. This has been the legacy of this industry for the past 70 years. The results of these projects have impacted the health and welfare of our people who worked in those mines, has bankrupted the aquifers that feed our springs and rivers, and left lasting scars and contamination on the landscape that will persist for centuries if not forever. The proposed Laramide Mine carries those same risks.

The environmental risks of this project are substantial. The company proposes to remove 500 tons of uranium ore per day, with 12-13 truckloads traveling through our communities daily. This creates risks of dust contamination, potential ore spills, and increased heavy traffic on our roads. The project's 24/7 operations, including blasting and heavy equipment use, threaten to destabilize the geological formations, potentially impacting groundwater flow patterns and creating new pathways for contamination. The clay-lined storage pad for radioactive ore at the surface facility presents additional risks of contamination from stormwater runoff and potential liner failures.

These impacts, combined with the cumulative effects from historic mining in the area, pose unacceptable risks to our air quality, water resources, and the health of our people.

But these environmental concerns extend beyond the immediate project footprint. This mine would draw significant water from the San Andres Glorieta Aquifer - a critically important water source that feeds the Rio San Jose flowing through Acoma. This aquifer is already overdrawn, and further depletion threatens our community's water security. While we understand Laramide will seek water permits from the State Engineer, the fundamental issue remains - our region cannot sustain another major industrial water user.

Of profound importance is this project's impact on Mount Taylor, a Traditional Cultural Property central to Acoma's cultural and spiritual practices. The proposed mining activities would significantly impair our people's ability to conduct essential cultural practices that have endured for generations. This concern is shared across all Pueblo, as evidenced by the All Pueblo Council of Governors' recent unanimous resolution opposing this project. We have shared a copy of that resolution with your staff but also have copies of it here today.

While we are here today in opposition, we are also here to listen. We want to understand how the Mining and Minerals Division will evaluate this permit application, what standards will be applied, and how you will weigh the serious concerns raised by impacted communities. We expect rigorous scrutiny of this application and full consideration of its impact on Acoma and surrounding communities.

The decisions made about this project will have generational consequences for our people. Acoma people cannot simply move. This is our home and has been since the time of our emergence and migration here. We will still be here long after the Laramide mine has closed its operations. The legacy of whatever impact is left by that mine will be those of future Acoma people to bear.

We urge you to recognize this in your determinations. Your decisions will impact us all.

With that, I would like to turn it over to you for your comment or presentation. We can then engage in some dialogue about the project. Thank you, *dawaa'ee*.