

· EDITORIAL ·

Draw line on nuclear energy

Linda Helm Krapf, the founder of the former Myhelan Cultural Arts Foundation in Long Valley, has made a film about the devastating effects of uranium mining on the culture and people of the Navajo Nation in New Mexico.

The film describes the many people who suffered serious medical illnesses from past uranium mining and also explains plans by a large, Texas utility to drill for more uranium on the reservation.

Why should anyone in our area, thousands of miles away, care?

Of course, there is the simple humanitarian reason to care when a people without political clout is victimized by more powerful entities like big business and the federal government.

The travesty is made that much more significant because of the sad history this nation has regarding subjugation and persecution of Native Americans.

But there are other reasons, equally important, and they involve the future of nuclear energy and energy policy in general in this nation.

As fuel prices continue to soar, New Jersey and other states are considering whether to reintroduce nuclear power into their long-range energy plans.

There are still significant safety concerns not only about operation of nuclear plants but about disposal of the waste. Nuclear power should not be a substitute for safer, renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind.

But sometimes it is a case of the tail wagging the dog, particularly when a large power company wants to build a new nuclear plant. The influence of the power industry can and does drive the political decisions that are made.

>>RELATED STORY

The founder of a Long Valley cultural arts group has made a film about uranium mining on the Navajo Nation reservation. Please see the story on page 10.

Hydro Resources, Inc. (HRI), the New Mexico subsidiary of a Dallas-based uranium company, has U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission approval to drill the new mines. Work has not commenced and the Navajo Nation plans legal action.

If the mining starts, it is likely that the uranium will be exported to nuclear facilities around the nation, possibly including to New Jersey.

Uranium mining is wrong because of its effect on the underground water supplies. The process involves drilling and operating hundreds of wells, known as in-situ leach (ISL) uranium mining. Such drilling has caused permanent contamination of the wells and experts suggest it could leave 15,000 Navajos with no clean source of drinking water.

The residents of Morris County will be affected directly or indirectly from the use of nuclear energy. Residents should take ownership that if they don't object to the use of nuclear energy, they will be fueling the demand for uranium and indirectly, aiding those who would drill on the Navajo Nation lands.

There are many such deep relationships between the different sections of the country. New Mexico is only as far as the next nuclear power plant that is built in New Jersey.