



December 11, 2023

To: Nuclear Regulatory Commission

Re: White Mesa Mill

Great Old Broads for Wilderness (Broads) is a women-led national grassroots organization that engages in and inspires activism to preserve and protect wilderness and wild lands. Our volunteer-led chapters, located in rural and urban communities across the nation, organize members to engage as advocates to protect and steward wilderness and wild places. This letter represents the collective voice of our members.

The White Mesa Uranium Mill (White Mesa Mill) is located just a few miles north of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe's small community of White Mesa. Since its construction in the late 1970s, White Mesa Mill has contaminated water and air with radioactive waste and toxic pollutants, destroyed plant and animal populations, and prevented the community from enjoying and subsisting off of the land.¹ Activities at White Mesa Mill also threaten the incredible cultural and natural resources on nearby public lands like Bears Ears National Monument.

White Mesa Mill opened in 1980 with an environmental assessment that estimated a 15-year lifespan. However, instead of closing, White Mesa Mill began processing radioactive waste from other sites in the United States, as well as radioactive waste from foreign governments. This structure allows Energy Fuels Resources, the company that runs White Mesa Mill, to operate and profit under a lenient regulatory framework which allows it to dispose of waste in the land permanently.²

On August 24, 2021, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe passed a resolution stating that “...the operations of the White Mesa Mill has had severe health impacts on the residents of White Mesa and should cease entirely...”³ Broads stands in solidarity with the Ute

¹ Grand Canyon Trust. *The Business of Radioactive Waste*. May 2023.

https://www.grandcanyontrust.org/sites/default/files/resources/Alt_Feeds_Report_2023.pdf

² High Country News. *The nation's last uranium mill plans to import Estonia's radioactive waste*.

November 1, 2021.

<https://www.hcn.org/issues/53.11/indigenous-affairs-nuclear-energy-the-nations-last-uranium-mill-plans-to-import-estonias-radioactive-waste>

³ Ute Mountain Ute Tribe Tribal Council. “Resolution No. 2021-135: Opposition to the Proposal by United States National Nuclear Security Administration, Department of Energy to Establish a Strategic Uranium

Mountain Ute Tribe in opposition to the environmental and public health devastation caused by White Mesa Mill. We support the following requests developed by the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe:

1. The entire contaminated area around White Mesa Mill must be closed and sealed so no further contamination occurs.
2. Energy Fuels Resources must complete the liquid cover for Cell 4B at White Mesa Mill, which would prevent additional dispersal of contaminants.
3. Energy Fuels Resources must address the leaking tailings ponds at White Mesa Mill.
4. White Mesa Mill must cease acceptance of additional contaminated waste.
5. White Mesa Mill must cease efforts to expand operations.
6. An epidemiology study must be undertaken immediately to assess the health impacts on White Mesa Community residents. Energy Fuels and/or the State of Utah must cover all costs for the study.

We greatly value our relationship with the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe. Broads is honored to support the Tribe's efforts to end contamination and destruction in the White Mesa community. Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sara Husby', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sara Husby
Executive Director
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
(970) 385-9577