

March 12, 2010

Washington, DC – Today, Congressmen Teague, Luján and Heinrich introduced legislation to make all Surface Mine and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) funds eligible for the remediation of old uranium mines and mills. If the bill were to pass it would make \$14.5 million in existing SMCRA funds available for use to clean the 137 uranium sites across the state that need remediation.

“Cleaning up the legacy of the uranium mines and mills is something we owe to our land, our people, and our water,” said Congressman Harry Teague who represents all of Cibola county and part of McKinley county where many of the sites in need of remediation are located.

“Making these funds available for uranium site remediation would create jobs in areas where people need to be put back to work, and we would be able to do it using existing funds.”

“Accessing SMCRA funds to reclaim abandoned mining and milling sites creates jobs for New Mexico and begins the long process of restoring our lands and making them accessible to future generations,” said Congressman Ben Ray Luján.

“These contaminated uranium mine and mill sites in New Mexico need to be cleaned up,” said Congressman Martin Heinrich. “This action will create clean-up jobs and protect New Mexico’s most important assets—the health of our citizens and our water.”

According to the Department of Interior, a state cannot use certain SMCRA funds for uranium site remediation until the state has certified that all coal remediation has been completed. Congressmen Teague, Luján and Heinrich introduced the legislation to make all SMCRA funds available to uranium sites immediately because uranium clean-up is a bigger need in the state.