

WATER IS OUR MOST IMPORTANT RESOURCE; NOT URANIUM

I appreciate the fact that the article, “Drilling Activity Increases”, is an attempt to keep the community informed about what is happening with the In-Situ Leaching (ISL) of uranium in our county. However, I hope that future articles will be more investigative in that they present all sides of this critical issue, rather than appearing to be a promotional ad for the uranium companies.

This process of ISL has a long history of serious problems that have yet to be resolved. You can find reports of this on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission website (www.nrc.gov). They provide details of millions of gallons of spills, leaks, and excursions of contaminated solutions, proving these violations are business as usual at these sites. Strata Energy may be using sophisticated technology to determine where the ore bodies are located. However, to my knowledge, there is no new technology for actually implementing and completing this process. They will be processing the uranium in the same manner as the other sites, with the same huge potential for contamination and depletion of our aquifers.

As far as local landowners finding this exciting, I imagine that some people do find the possibility of making money exciting. Those of us whose wells are outside the mining areas have little cause for excitement. There are hundreds of wells registered with the state that are within 10 miles of the boundaries of this extensive mining area. This process has a huge potential to draw down the groundwater level, so those well owners will not be excited about the fact that we may have to pay to drill deeper to find adequate water in the future. The mining companies test only the water within the mining area for contamination, while the outlying well owners are left to pay for our own testing. The contaminants that could escape the mining area are extremely dangerous to our health, yet they are colorless, odorless, and tasteless. For the rest of us to be certain that our water is safe, we would have to test frequently, with the cost to test for all of the elements concerned running close to \$300 each time.

A comment was made by one landowner that Strata Energy has shown they can contain the drilling. Of course they can contain the drilling, but how will they contain the contaminated solutions? How will they get rid of the millions and millions of gallons of contaminated waste water that this process produces? More importantly, how will they restore the water to baseline values when they are done? According to the NRC, there has not been a single ISL site that has been able to restore the water to baseline, without having the standards reduced.

The truly unbelievable comment was that this is “the most environmentally friendly process known”. The uranium companies are the only ones that call it this, and merely because the surface disturbance is not as bad as with conventional mining. However, we will still see huge areas that are currently used for grazing and hunting, covered with processing buildings, new roads, new power lines, acres and acres of waste water evaporation ponds and more. And what can be environmentally friendly about concentrating uranium, selenium, arsenic, and other poisonous elements into our aquifers? Water is our most precious resource. We can all live without uranium, but none of us can live without water.

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